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# STORY OF THE LADY BETTY STAIR



MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL

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1898







**THE HISTORY OF THE  
LADY BETTY STAIR**





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“ ‘ I present you with the Cross for Tried Bravery. None has deserved it more than you.’ ”

THE HISTORY  
OF THE LADY  
BETTY STAIR

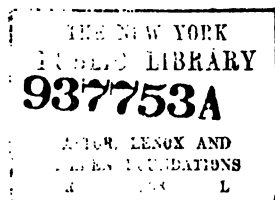
BY  
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## The History of the Lady Betty Stair



IN the year 1798 the palace of Holyrood was inhabited by a swarm of French people,—his Royal Highness the Comte d'Artois, who in his youth had danced so deliciously on the tight-rope as to be the admiration of the Little Trianon, and in his old age was Charles X. of France; his Savoyard princess, Marie Thérèse; and some gentlemen and ladies in waiting. Among the suite were four persons whose lives had been remotely but strangely connected in the old days at Versailles; and as fate is an adept at such tricks, all four of them were brought together in this old haunted palace when the Comte d'Artois took up his abode there.



## The History of the

One of them, the Abbé de Ronceray, was a brave, gentle old priest, who had once been a soldier and was a soldier still at heart; another was De Bourmont, a fellow with a fine figure, a plain face, but irresistible among the ladies; the third was Bastien, — handsome, but an arrant scoundrel; and the fourth was Lady Betty Stair, one of the sweetest creatures that ever lived. Years before, in 1789, when Lady Betty was a mere chit of fifteen, she knew both De Bourmont and Bastien well by sight. They were officers in the Queen's Musketeers, and Lady Betty's education had been finished at the palace of Versailles, under the care of Madame Mirabel, an ancient hanger-on of the court, so they had a plenty of chances to meet. But she was so young and unformed that De Bourmont had never noticed the handsome slip of a girl; and Bastien had a most unpleasant recollection of her. In those days she had a brother, Angus Mac-

## Lady Betty Stair

donald, an officer in the Scottish Guard of the King of France, as his father had been before him. The Macdonalds were of those who had poured out their blood and treasure with a free hand for the Stuarts, and esteemed George III. just as much a "Hanoverian rat" as George I. They were also of that remnant of the Highland families which held to the old religion, and, being cut off thereby from the profession of arms in their own country, they were apt to pass over to France, in each generation, and see some service under the fleur-de-lis of the Bourbons. The old laird himself had served in Berwick's brigade, and had married a French girl, who died young, leaving him a boy and girl. The son, therefore, following the traditions of his family, went to France for the restless years of his youth, and the old laird sent his only daughter, the apple of his eye, with her brother to be "finished" in her mother's land. The

## The History of the

brother and sister had the simple ways of Scotch people, and, in spite of Madame Mirabel's "finishing" process, Lady Betty, who was the most high-bred creature imaginable, could never get over this pretty simplicity. She and Angus openly kissed each other quite warmly at parting, no matter who was present; and one morning — it was that terrible October day in 1789, when Versailles entertained strange company, consisting of a hundred thousand of the "canaille," as the Versailles people called them — she kissed Angus in sight of Bastien, who did not know they were brother and sister. Bastien, passing along a few minutes after, ogled Lady Betty very odiously, which she responded to by a cool stare, quite unlike a French girl's drooping glance; and Bastien, then and there, made the greatest mistake of his life. He paid Lady Betty an impudent compliment and completed his folly by a motion as if to kiss her.

## Lady Betty Stair

Now, Lady Betty held in her hand a large green fan, and when Bastien thought he was about to gain a kiss, she raised the fan, and, bringing it down on his nose with all the strength in her strong young arm, gave him such a whack that he was, in a minute, as bloody as a butcher, and wore court-plaster for a week.

Lady Betty, having done this timely act of justice, immediately fled, blushing with the fierceness of insulted maidenhood, while Bastien stood still and cursed her and her green fan. Being a highly accomplished liar, however, he invented a romance of a baker's wife having assaulted him while he was trying, later in the morning, to keep her out of the Queen's bedroom; and he really made a very comical story out of it — only, there was not a word of truth in it.

But events so terrible followed a few days after, that for months, and even years, Lady Betty almost forgot this ad-

## The History of the

venture. Besides the outbreak of that ferocious thirst for freedom called the Revolution, Lady Betty met with a dreadful sorrow and loss. Within a week of the episode of the green fan and Bastien's nose, Angus Macdonald was found one evening, shortly after dark, lying stark and dead in the forest of Fontainebleau, and he had evidently lost his life in a duel.

The name of his adversary and the cause of the quarrel remained a mystery; but there was a suspicion that the Abbé de Ronceray knew something about it. It so happened that he had that very day received ordination as a priest, after having spent more than thirty years with the reputation of a peculiarly dashing *beau sabreur*, and having reached the rank of commandant of battalion. He had gone to Fontainebleau in the afternoon, at the urgent request of the old curé, who happened to be ill and to need the services of an assistant. About dusk the



"Now, Lady Betty had in her hand a large green fan."

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## Lady Betty Stair

new-made priest was sitting with the curé, when a servant came upstairs and, with a scared face, told De Ronceray that a gentleman, evidently an officer, was downstairs in the little salon and was in deep agitation. Would M. de Ronceray come at once?

The new-made priest went down, carrying a lighted candle in his hand, being unfamiliar with the house. As he entered the salon a young man in uniform arose, and, before the priest could get a look at him, blew out the candle, leaving them in darkness.

Having been used to danger all his life, this little occurrence only caused De Ronceray to say coolly, "Well, my friend, just as you like. If you prefer the darkness —"

The officer's response was to close and lock the door, to which De Ronceray made no objection. The two remained locked in the room, and in darkness, conversing in whispers, for half an hour, when a knock came at



## The History of the

the door. The officer responded by dropping through the window on the priest's flower-bed, and then took briskly to his heels. De Ronceray opened the door and almost ran into the arms of young De Bourmont. The two had known each other, as a subaltern and a commandant might, and De Bourmont had come to pay his respects to his old chief. De Ronceray was charmed to see him, and the two sat up half the night conversing. De Bourmont, before then, had been somewhat irreligious, but a change for the better was noted in him after that night, and he and the ex-commandant became fast friends.

When the tragedy of Angus Macdonald's death that evening became known, De Ronceray said nothing about his mysterious visitor — whose face he had not seen, and whose voice, except in whispers, he had not heard. But the servant, like most of her kind, was unable to hold her tongue and gave a brilliantly picturesque description of it,

## Lady Betty Stair

not forgetting the incident of De Bourmont's visit. The story, in going from mouth to mouth, naturally had many additions and emendations, and it was whispered abroad that De Bourmont was the slayer of the young Scotch officer. But the days of storm and stress were at hand then, and such a trifle as the loss of a single life made the less stir when lives went down before the red revolution as the ripe wheat before the sickle.

The story reached the ears of the broken-hearted young sister, but in such form that she only knew it was thought that De Ronceray knew something concerning Angus Macdonald's murderer. Alone, except for the elderly infant known as Madame Mirabel, and preparing to return to Scotland through the storm of the Revolution, Lady Betty had no means, and indeed no wish, to know the name of her brother's murderer. Angus could never come back — the rest mattered little.

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At last the two women — Lady Betty being entitled to be called a woman for her spirit and sharp intelligence rather than by reason of her years — reached the eyry in the Highlands which was the home of the Macdonalds of Stair.

It was a melancholy life enough for the two during the next few years. Madame Mirabel, with the singular fortitude that those shallow, trifling people of the French court showed generally in their misfortunes, bore her exile without a word of complaint. The climate, the people, the fare, the bagpipes, even the heather that made the towering peaks about them to be clothed in royal purple, she hated with all her French soul, — but she said no word. As for Lady Betty, who was as proud as any Highland chieftain ever was, she would rather have died than uttered one complaint. The old laird was that not uncommon character a hundred years ago, a Highlandman, half

## Lady Betty Stair

savage and half courtier, who talked more Gaelic and more French than he did English, almost found consolation for the loss of his only son in the charm and tenderness of his only daughter. For her sake he even gave up having those noisy drinking bouts at his house when a score of Highland gentlemen would assemble and spend, not hours, but days, "on the lee side of a bowl of punch." On one of these occasions, Sandy Macgowan, one of the inferior gentry, having been observed to sit perfectly still for several hours, a cursory examination revealed that Sandy was dead. This trifling accident did not interrupt the proceedings though, and the old laird's reply, some days after, to Madame Mirabel's volubly expressed horror, was brief and to the point: —

"Would ye have the pleasure of a company of gentlemen disturbed for such a pair creature as Sandy Macgowan?"

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Lady Betty, however, cast a glance of such reproach at her father that the laird actually blushed for the first time in forty years, and left the room. Not long afterward, though, the laird followed Sandy Macgowan, and Lady Betty was indeed alone in the world.

In the same year, '98, a great event happened to her, however. The Comte d'Artois having taken refuge at Holyrood, it was thought well in order to keep the Edinburgh people satisfied with their visitors, that at least one of the young ladies of the old Jacobite families be asked to attend the Princess Marie Thérèse, — and a shrewd move it was. Lady Betty was their choice, and nothing could have been more judicious; for, in spite of her readiness to wield her green fan on impudent young gentlemen, and the unforgettable sorrow for her father and brother, the sweetness, the charm she carried with her, was irresistible, — and the French colony needed all the consolatory charm

## Lady Betty Stair

that could be had, especially the young De Bourmont.

In the spirit of devotion among the old nobility to their exiled royalties, a request was equivalent to a command, and the Comte d'Artois, having requested De Bourmont's company, that high-spirited young gentleman, ex-officer of the Queen's Musketeers, thereupon had to spend several of the best years of his life in laboriously watching and waiting upon a man who did nothing all day long and half the night. At first De Bourmont bore it with the fine air of a martyr; then he yearned and burned to join the Vendéans, and latterly he had boldly made up his mind to go over to the Corsican at the first decent opportunity. He was thinking about this one autumn night in 1798, as he leaned against the wall in the courtyard of Holyrood, fingering his sword and biting his lips and muttering grimly to himself, when up rattled a huge old travelling chariot, and, the steps being let down, a

## The History of the

simpering old French lady descended, and after her the sweetest, freshest, most laughing, coquettish young girl De Bourmont had ever seen, — Lady Betty Stair. Now, De Bourmont had little difficulty in identifying the party. He knew the Scotch girl was expected, and had pictured to himself a tall, rawboned, redhaired girl, — in short, a Highland chief in long petticoats. And Bastien, who was coming around the corner of the stone gateway, recognized them and gave a little start, and changing color turned back, but presently came forward again. Bastien's claim to being of the old nobility was a little shady; consequently, he highly valued his attendance on royalty, and was willing to stay as long as the Comte d'Artois wanted him.

Lady Betty, with the eye of an eaglet in her own mountains, recognized both men by the light of the flaring flambeaux carried by the running footmen, — Bastien with a thrill of hatred, fear, and

## Lady Betty Stair

disgust, and De Bourmont with a thrill of a very different sort. She remembered seeing him at Versailles years before, and she recalled a certain little girlish, almost childish tenderness she had felt for him, which suddenly came to life when she saw him again. As for Madame Mirabel, forgetting all about etiquette, which had been the passion and study of her lifetime, she rushed up to De Bourmont and fairly embraced him.

“Oh, my dear De Bourmont,” she cried, “such a happiness to see a French face once more !”

De Bourmont gallantly and impudently responded to this by giving her a sounding kiss upon her withered cheek, at which the delighted old lady protested loudly.

“And here,” continued Madame, “here is Miladi Betty — don’t you remember her at Versailles in that dear, sweet, happy time ? — oh me, oh me !”

“Ah, yes,” answered De Bourmont,



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advancing and bowing to the ground as he kissed the tips of Lady Betty's fingers, "I recollect this young lady well as a little demoiselle. She was so pretty, and so proud — she reminded me of a young peacock in the King's gardens."

Lady Betty blushed more than ever at this — and then some one else came forward.

"Dear, dear Bastien," cried Madame Mirabel, who had scarcely known Bastien in the old days, but who would have been glad to see a dog from Versailles.

Lady Betty stood for a moment throbbing and thrilling as to whether she should speak to Bastien or not. But having, with all her grace and spirit, her own share of hard Scotch sense, she saw in a moment that she would be a laughing-stock forever, and would have to leave Holyrood, if ever that green fan episode came out, she wisely determined to ignore it for the



“‘I recollect this young lady well.’”

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## Lady Betty Stair

present. Besides, did Bastien really know her? and had he ever known her name? Bastien was perfectly familiar with both, but he did not choose to acknowledge it, and so he made Lady Betty a low bow, and carefully divested his countenance of the smallest recognition.

“’T is too late to see their Royal Highnesses to-night,” cried De Bourmont, “so there is nothing for it but to come and sup in my apartment — you, too, Bastien,” thinking from Madame Mirabel’s cordial greeting that they were bosom friends of long standing.

Bastien, at this, had his moment of hesitation. Should he risk it with that beautiful young virago or not? but he arrived by an instantaneous course of reasoning at the very same conclusion that Lady Betty had come to regarding himself, — he thought she did not recognize him, and Bastien devoutly hoped she never would. And there was something else — a more serious thing —

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Bastien tried to put it out of his mind but he could not; he felt himself shudder slightly at the expectation that the name of Lady Betty's dead brother be spoken before him — he never liked to hear that name. However, a little while saw them seated around a supper-table in De Bourmont's grim, half-furnished room in the old palace, with a good fire and wax lights and a Scotch-French supper to cheer them up.

The Lady Betty Stair was distinctively a child of palaces, so that she would have been perfectly happy but for Bastien's presence, — and even that could not seriously affect her happiness. Besides — blessed thought — he did not know her! Ah, Lady Betty, Lady Betty, he knows you well enough, and he means to make you pay for that once-skinned nose of his!

Madame Mirabel did an almost inconceivable amount of eating and talking, and Bastien, with an eye to punishing Lady Betty's Scotch pride,

## Lady Betty Stair

began to complain bitterly of Edinburgh and Holyrood.

“An old rat-hole, my dear Madame. And the parties — oh, the parties! Once a week we have levees in an old hall full of nightmares in canvas, — portraits of Scotch kings, — and the great people from the town are invited. Perhaps you thought the old nobility of France proud, but you ought to see these people. Their pedigrees go back to Moses, and their pride is as long as their pedigrees.”

Lady Betty would have dearly liked to box Bastien's ears for this, but De Bourmont, who was a sharp fellow, said, very artfully: “I think our levees most charming — and every spot consecrated to the memory of Mary Stuart, as this old castle is, must ever be interesting.”

De Bourmont knew, well enough, that a true Scotchman or a Scotchwoman bases his or her opinion of a person upon that person's opinion of Mary Stuart. So Lady Betty smiled

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brilliantly at De Bourmont, whose fortune was made from that onward with her, and said : "You are worthy, Monsieur, of the hospitality of the Scotch people."

"And who is in the suite?" asked Madame Mirabel.

Bastien named several persons, and among others the Abbé de Ronceray,— "the best man and the worst bore! He is always after me about my soul, when I am thinking about my body, and he preaches alms-giving to us when most of us are so devilish poor that we are afraid to meet our washerwomen."

"He was my old commander," said De Bourmont, laughing, "and the first thing he did when he became a priest was to order me to go to confession, and I was afraid to refuse. I had merely called to hear the news; it was the evening of that dreadful October day at Versailles in 1789, and I was stationed at Fontainebleau, where we heard all sorts of wild reports,— most

## Lady Betty Stair

of them turned out to be worse than we dreamed, — and, knowing the Abbé had come from Paris that morning, I went to his house ostensibly to pay my respects. Before I knew it, I was on my knees in the confessional. I was his first penitent; and I made him a confession that kept him awake that night, *I know*.”

Madame Mirabel cackled with laughter. Bastien rose suddenly and went to the window, which he raised a little.

“Pardon, Madame and Mademoiselle — just a breath of air —”

He came back in a moment to his chair looking much as usual, but in pouring out a glass of wine, his hand shook so that the wine was spilled on the cloth.

At the mention of the Abbé de Ronceray’s name Lady Betty turned a little pale, remembering the vague story which credited him with knowing who was the murderer of Angus Macdonald. She said nothing, however, only wishing in



## The History of the

her heart that some other Abbé were at Holyrood instead of this one, whose very name was a painful reminder of a terrible tragedy in her life. De Bourmont, whose eyes were quick, saw that the subject was an unfortunate one, for Lady Betty sighed instead of smiling at his little story; so he turned it very aptly and began to sing the praises of Edinburgh and Scotland in general. Usually, nobody was sharper at finding out the meaning of words than Lady Betty; but, being a Scotchwoman, she fell directly into De Bourmont's trap, and smiled and blushed with pleasure, to the vast delight of that young hypocrite.

De Bourmont was so gay and full of life that he made the evening charming. In spite of his gayety, though, Lady Betty saw, plainly enough, a restlessness in his manner which showed that the life he was leading did not altogether suit him. And presently, when Madame Mirabel and Bastien were deep in recalling the terrible incidents that had

## Lady Betty Stair

happened to those left behind in France, De Bourmont and Lady Betty began to talk confidentially, and his dissatisfaction was plain.

"We occupy ourselves with trifles here," he said bitterly, "because else we should go mad. Think,—almost every Frenchman is fighting for France, and here we are, and we can neither fight for her nor against her. That is it which keeps me awake at night, and inspires me to all the desperate schemes of amusement that we can find in this sober town."

Lady Betty, who came of good fighting stock, fully understood this.

"Let me tell you, under the rose, here," she said, "I like that Corsican, General Bonaparte. I believe he will do greater things for France than he has done yet."

And De Bourmont, looking very black, whispered: "It is maddening—maddening to be here."

Bastien being a marplot, and seeing

## The History of the

how fast De Bourmont was establishing himself in Lady Betty's good graces, was impelled by the devil of mischief-making to say, laughing: "De Bourmont is the only one of us who has any money, and what he has he won of me on a wager concerning the beautiful daughter of Counsellor Mackenzie, the lawyer in Castle Street."

De Bourmont was not too well pleased that this escapade with the lawyer's daughter in Castle Street should be dragged forth before the proud Lady Betty Stair; but being a bold fellow, and believing in the policy of rashness, he determined to tell the story on himself.

"Castle Street, you know," said he, "is in the new town, where the rich lawyers and doctors and the retired tradesmen live; and it is cleaner and brighter than the old town, with its great rookeries belonging to the nobles. But the new town people are not invited to our levees and balls here.

## Lady Betty Stair

Well, one day I saw the Counsellor Mackenzie's lily daughter in the street. Bastien was with me and we both tried to get a glance from Flora Mackenzie, fair and stately. But in vain. Then we very wickedly made a wager — was it not wicked, Madame Mirabel ? ”

“ Dreadfully wicked,” said Madame, delightedly, and charmed to be once more with such gay dogs.

“ Our wager was fifty louis, whether I could or could not get into Counsellor Mackenzie's house and be introduced to his daughter — who is a pretty girl enough for a lawyer's daughter, but nothing like the old nobility,” with which De Bourmont looked meaningly and admiringly at Lady Betty's highbred beauty.

“ It put me to a score of trouble that cost me more than fifty louis; but at last it came about in the easiest way in the world. I saw an advertisement of a French master wanted for Miss Flora Mackenzie. I presented

## The History of the

myself. I was ushered into a gloomy morning-room. The counsellor was there, who though but a lawyer is a gentleman if ever I saw one, Madame and Mademoiselle. I gave my first lesson, and pocketed fifty louis from Bastien !”

“ And have given about a dozen lessons since !” cried Bastien.

De Bourmont colored warmly.

“ It is good money earned,” he said angrily.

“ And Miss Flora Mackenzie is the richest heiress in Edinburgh, too !” continued Bastien, in a bantering tone.

De Bourmont turned still more crimson. An indescribable look of haughtiness came into Lady Betty’s clear, dark gray eyes. An attorney’s daughter in Castle Street !

Bastien, conscious that he had said enough and more than enough, dropped the subject. De Bourmont turned again to Lady Betty, but found her rather cold and unresponsive, and, in

## Lady Betty Stair

some way, the ending of the little supper was not so gay as its beginning.

Next day, the ladies were presented to their Royal Highnesses. De Bourmont had been wont to see people of great merit and high birth a little frightened in the presence of very small royalties ; but after seeing Lady Betty's graceful ease and modest composure in the presence of those esteemed to be great, he laughed no more at Scottish pride.

“ Faith, she acted as if she were herself only a princess of a lower degree,” he thought, and then he remembered that among all the red heads and hard features and rawboned figures he had seen at Edinburgh, he had not seen one toady — so Lady Betty was not so exceptional after all. The meeting with the Abbé de Ronceray was painful to Lady Betty. Nine years had passed since Angus Macdonald's death, and every year, so far from wishing to know the name of his murderer, as she called

## The History of the

his adversary, she became less willing to know it. It could not bring Angus back, and it would fill her with grief and vengeance toward some living person or dead memory. Nevertheless, by mere dint of thinking on the subject, she could not refrain from asking a few guarded questions of the Abbé. She found him not only totally uncommunicative, but from the first word he dropped she saw he did not suspect that Angus Macdonald and Lady Betty Stair were brother and sister. So Lady Betty determined to ask no more questions on the subject, and believe simply that Angus had lost his life in an honorable quarrel — for she knew him too well to suppose his death a dishonorable one. And so, without forgetting either Angus or the stout old Highlander, her father, Lady Betty chose to think on their lives rather than their deaths, and was tolerably happy herself, and helped many other persons to be happy.

De Bourmont devoted himself pretty

## Lady Betty Stair

assiduously from the first to Lady Betty, and tried hard to make her believe he had never given another thought to the lawyer's daughter in Castle Street. Of course he did give her a thought—De Bourmont was not the man to give up one lovely girl because there was another lovely girl in the case. But after he knew Lady Betty he merely fluttered in Castle Street because Flora Mackenzie was beautiful, and was cold, and there was a spice of adventure in the affair.

Soon, he and Lady Betty began to talk confidentially in the long hours they spent together, waiting in the gloomy corridors or the dreary anterooms for their Royal Highnesses to walk, to drive, to play cards — or to say they would do nothing at all. De Bourmont was very restless, and Lady Betty saw plainly enough that the Comte d'Artois would soon have to get a new gentleman-in-waiting. With this she keenly sympathized. Her father had been



## The History of the

“out in the forty-five” and her grandfather in “the fifteen,” and for a man’s country to be at war and that man not in the thick of the fight, seemed to her the most terrible of hardships. In her heart, she felt that De Bourmont would not be wholly a man until he cast off those false principles of honor which kept him a gentleman-in-waiting when he should have been a captain of the line, and in a subtle way, peculiarly her own, she communicated this to him without giving offence.

To De Bourmont, who was used to the artificial great ladies of France, this simple, daring, spirited Scotch girl was a revelation. She taught him the Highland dances, and actually persuaded the head of the family to let him wear the tartan. To carry this out, though, cost as much diplomacy as to get a dukedom, so De Bourmont feelingly complained. But he learned to dance these national dances beautifully, and his strong, lithe figure never looked

## Lady Betty Stair

handsomer than when, in a kilt and bonnet, he danced the sword dance before the royal people and their suite in the grand drawing-room at Holyrood.

“ Ah, Mademoiselle,” said the Comte d’Artois, who knew very well how to pay compliments to Lady Betty, “ the dances of your native land are not those of courtiers, but of warriors.”

Then Lady Betty, smiling and blushing, danced flings and reels and strathspeys, with De Bourmont for a partner, — and never was there a handsomer couple, or a more graceful. De Bourmont not only taught his legs to be Scotch, but even his stomach, and he ate unflinchingly of haggis and oatcake and other Scotch delicacies when he could get them, and never failed to tell Lady Betty how much he relished them — which was a lie, but told with a good purpose, — that of making headway with this charming little Highlander.

And yet, he continued on the sly to

## The History of the

give lessons in Castle Street. He could scarcely explain why he went there, except that he never could resist a pretty woman; and Flora Mackenzie was as handsome in her cold, stately way, as Lady Betty Stair with her ravishing sprightliness and highbred ease, — for the lawyer's daughter was much more formal and reserved than the laird's daughter. De Bourmont wondered often if the Mackenzies knew who he was; but the lines of caste and class were closely drawn in those days, and professional classes, to which the Mackenzies belonged, knew little or nothing of the French colony established at Holyrood, whose association was with the highest nobility only. The weekly levees, held in the long gallery at Holyrood, where Rose Bradwardine and Flora MacIvor had danced with Prince Charlie, were attended by all the great families in Edinburgh, but by none others. They were not gay levees, — there is always something tragic in



“Never was there a handsomer couple, or a more graceful.”

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## Lady Betty Stair

merrymakings at Holyrood, — but the Scotch people who attended them could trace their ancestry back to the Picts and were of the noblest blood of Scotland.

The dreary palace, and the dreary Royal Highnesses, and the weary, weary suite undoubtedly became brighter after the advent of Lady Betty Stair at the palace; and the evenings were not so long when she would charm them with her Scotch dancing and touch their hearts with her Scotch ballads, all done with her own sparkling grace. But can any day be short or any night be quiet to exiles in a strange land, as these unfortunate French people were?

## The History of the

### II

ALL this time Bastien and Lady Betty maintained an armed neutrality, though by degrees it grew on both that "the other one knew." And a strange thing happened to Bastien: he began to like Lady Betty a great deal more than was either convenient or agreeable. At first he had hated her, and never looked at her without remembering the blazing wrath that showed in her eyes when she whacked his nose; and then there was that secret uneasiness about something else which he always felt in her company. "Faith," he thought to himself sometimes, "perhaps it was a good thing she had no more dangerous weapon than a fan, for, sure, she would have used anything on me that came to her hand." And then he was a little fearful lest she

## Lady Betty Stair

should tell the story on him, particularly as Bastien's account of the whack he got from the baker's wife had passed into the history of the court, and was often alluded to. The first time this happened was soon after Lady Betty's arrival. They were all assembled for the evening in the drawing-room, drinking tea after the English fashion. Bastien was called upon to tell the story, and he very promptly began the tale, meaning to stick to it if Lady Betty should happen to let the truth out; for he had no great opinion of a woman's power to keep anything to herself. However, he had but little fear, because the lie would have many years' start of the truth in any event.

By strange luck, Lady Betty, who was serving tea, sat next Bastien that night. As he told the story for the hundredth time, amid shouts of laughter, — Lady Betty, listening very gravely, apparently minding her business of making the kettle boil over the spirit-lamp, —



## The History of the

she could not help blushing; but she blushed so often and so easily that nobody noticed it. Just as Bastien wound up, though, the kettle, which had not yet boiled, got a sudden tilt, and about a gallon of warm water was poured over Bastien's black silk breeches; and Lady Betty's voice was heard, in the tone of great meekness and softness which she always used when she meant to be impertinent:—

“Dear me!” she cried; “how unfortunate! A thousand apologies, M. Bastien.”

Bastien had more than a suspicion that it was not wholly an accident, but he was much too astute to show his suspicion. He bowed and smiled, and, professing to have an engagement with the chaplain, went off with a very good air. De Bourmont, who remained behind, laughed in Lady Betty's demure face. He was not sorry to see Bastien discomfited.

This should have made Bastien hate

## Lady Betty Stair

Lady Betty the more; but so full of contrariety is the human heart that it made him look at her more and think of her oftener,—and Lady Betty was so charming that no man was safe who came within the circle of her spell. Moreover, Bastien could have dashed his brains out at his own folly when he thought of it. Lady Betty was as poor as poverty,—for the dowry of a Scotch laird's daughter with a castle in the Highlands was likely to consist of heather-bells, romantic rocks, and a large stock of family pride. If there was anything on earth that Bastien loved more than his ease and comfort, it was the money to buy that ease and comfort. And, as if no element of contrariness should be lacking, Bastien felt that Lady Betty hated him. But there is a fire that warms itself at ice, and a fancy that loves contradictions,—and such was Bastien's.

As for De Bourmont, Lady Betty daily grew more charming to him, and,

## The History of the

likewise, he continued to go to Castle Street, telling himself quite seriously that each time would be the last. He sometimes wondered if Mistress Flora, or her father the counsellor, suspected his real rank. In those days, *émigrés* were found all over England and Scotland, earning their living by all sorts of trades. The counsellor had said to him in Castle Street the first time they had met, "Sir, are you a man of title?"

Now, if he had asked whether De Bourmont were a man of rank, it might have been hard to answer; but De Bourmont could truthfully say he had no title, in the sense the counsellor understood titles.

"For, look you, sir," continued the counsellor, "although I respect the French counts and marquises who work for their living, yet it has ever been found that it is not well to introduce them into the houses of plain citizens like me. Our wives and daughters get to be infatuated with the fellows,

## Lady Betty Stair

and will not look thereafter at honest, plain lawyers and doctors and merchants ; and I am too proud a man to wish my daughter to aspire to a rank she can never reach, and so I would have her satisfied with her own class, which is good enough for any woman, or man either."

At last, though, Lady Betty Stair's charms having helped to stiffen up his resolution, De Bourmont actually determined that his next visit should be his last. He felt some natural masculine interest in knowing how the lawyer's beautiful daughter would take the news, and he had enough masculine vanity to feel very sorry for her in having to resign his company. Flora Mackenzie was an unread riddle to him still. There was a sort of magnetic current between them, although they never exchanged a word except upon the subject of the French language and the weather. At every lesson there sat, in a high-backed chair, Mistress Macken-

## The History of the

zie, a simple, handsome creature, who was quite happy in her fine husband, her fine daughter, her fine house, and money in the bank.

On this day, therefore, when De Bourmont meant to make this announcement, as he was ushered into the grim drawing-room there sat the counsellor, — a tall, burly man, with the darkest, deepest, truest eyes De Bourmont had ever seen. Boys sometimes have such eyes in the white innocence of their youth; but when a man keeps it through the storms of his manhood, he must be, as was this Scotch lawyer, needlessly and superfluously honest.

The counsellor held a great big card of invitation in his hand, while over him stood his wife and daughter, and even the gentle and stately Flora was in a flutter; and as De Bourmont was ushered in the counsellor roared out, in his big, rich voice: —

“ Well, M. de Bourmont, you see my

## Lady Betty Stair

womankind all set by the ears over a trumpery invitation to the castle.”

At this De Bourmont involuntarily straightened himself up. Although he had managed to bear himself heretofore so that his rank and station were only suspected, not ascertained, he could not conceal the pride of a noble altogether.

“Sir,” he said with dignity to the counsellor, “an invitation from one of the royal princes of France is no trumpery invitation. The Comte d’Artois has received much civility from the gentlemen of Edinburgh, and would return it as becomes a prince and a gentleman.”

“Good for you !” cried the counsellor, jumping up and slapping De Bourmont on the back as a butcher slaps a bullock ; while Flora’s sweet voice echoed, “ Good for you ! ”

De Bourmont was too much of a gentleman not to know how to take the counsellor’s hearty commendation. He only laughed and rubbed his shoulder.

## The History of the

But he had great curiosity about the invitation. They were strictly confined to the nobility and higher gentry of the town, and how one got to a rich lawyer in the new town puzzled him not a little. He looked at the handwriting and he saw in an instant that it was Bastien's. The whole thing was revealed in a flash. Bastien wanted to bring the Mackenzies and Lady Betty Stair together before De Bourmont's eyes and for his discomfiture, because never, since the night of Lady Betty's arrival, when Bastien had let the Castle Street cat out of the bag, had there been good feeling between the two. De Bourmont had not only won Bastien's money, but had cut him out with the fair sex; and Bastien was not the fellow to miss a chance of getting even.

De Bourmont said nothing, though, but returned the card into Flora's white hand, which he squeezed upon the sly. Flora changed color slightly, but her blue eyes met his with cool composure.

## Lady Betty Stair

The womenkind were plainly bent on going to the great ball, and the counsellor at heart felt a secret satisfaction in the invitation, which was the greater compliment because so absolutely unsolicited. Mistress Mackenzie begged De Bourmont to show her how to approach royalty, — for etiquette was strict at Holyrood and no man, woman, or child was allowed to go out of the presence of the royal princes other than backward. De Bourmont, in high good humor, agreed to do this. He put the fine old counsellor in a huge chair to represent the Comte d'Artois.

“And look you, Mr. Mackenzie,” he said, “I would not place any unworthy man to represent his Royal Highness.”

“I appreciate your handsome compliment, sir,” answered the counsellor with dignity.

Then De Bourmont took Mistress Mackenzie in hand. She was wonderfully quick to learn, and advanced,



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bowed, and retreated, with the tail of her gown over her arm, so easily that De Bourmont taxed her with having been to court.

“Not so much as you, perhaps,” said the counsellor, very significantly.

De Bourmont took no notice of this, which convinced the shrewd Scotchman that the Frenchman was a man of position, because a vulgarian would have jumped at such a suggestion with delight.

But if Mistress Mackenzie was easy to teach the graces of society, Flora required no teaching at all, and showed herself much more apt at French graces than the French language. Waving her white hand disdainfully at De Bourmont, she said, “I do not need to be taught how to approach *anybody* !”

At that she made her bow so prettily and gracefully that De Bourmont cried, “Bravo !” and the old counsellor shouted, “Well done, my girl !”

There was no lesson in the language

## Lady Betty Stair

that day, but when De Bourmont was leaving, Counsellor Mackenzie went with him to the door.

"M. de Bourmont," said he, very positively, "I am under the impression that you know more about royalties than you are willing to admit. In short, I charge you with being a gentleman."

For answer, De Bourmont turned his pockets, which were quite empty, inside out.

"That does not argue that you are not a gentleman," coolly remarked old Mackenzie. "On the contrary, your willingness to show me your poverty confirms me in my belief. But if you were the man I should take you for, you would be fighting for your country in these days."

De Bourmont grew quite pale, and stood for a moment with the shaft rankling in his heart. Then, without another word, he went rapidly down the street and disappeared from view.

## The History of the

The afternoon was fast melting into night and there was a gray pall of mist and rain over the old town. De Bourmont walked on, not feeling the rain or the wind. In his ears rang Mackenzie's words. He should be fighting for his country! He could almost see the Austrians and the Prussians advancing upon French armies and trampling Frenchmen under their feet — and he, he here in idleness! He ground his teeth, and walked and walked for hours, he knew not whither. He did not appear at dinner that night, and Lady Betty Stair was sad and distraught. About ten o'clock, when the solemn game of ombre was going on in the grand salon, De Bourmont came in. He looked haggard, and sat down silently in a window seat. Presently, Lady Betty Stair came along and sat down by him.

"Where have you been, that you look so sad?" she asked.

"At Saulsbury Crag."

## Lady Betty Stair

"On such a night!"

"Yes. A Scotchman asked me to-day why I was not fighting for France. I could not come back after that and play cards with his Royal Highness."

"I know how you must have felt," said Lady Betty, in a low voice.

"Not quite," answered De Bourmont, with a smile that was ferocious in its despair. "No one can know what a Frenchman suffers, all of whose ancestors used their swords for France, while now she is fighting all Europe, and he stays here in attendance upon royalty!"

De Bourmont spoke with such a concentration of rage that Lady Betty looked around, fearful that he might be overheard.

"Don't trouble yourself, Lady Betty Stair," said he, smiling slightly. "I wish I could be overheard! I wish this moment that his Royal Highness would kick me out of this place. Sometimes, do you know, I ask myself if those

## The History of the

'canaille' in France are not right after all in thinking the country more than the king. See how gallantly they fought the Austrians that we, *we*, *WE*, the royalists, invited into France to avenge the killing of the king and queen! I assure you, I have not spent a day in peace or slept a night through since first I began following his Royal Highness. I thought it was my duty at first; but there is 'noblesse oblige' for one's country as well as one's sovereign, and I will be hanged, shot, or guillotined," he suddenly cried, "if I stay out of France another month!"

"Good, good!" cried Lady Betty.  
"There spoke a man!"

"But remember," said De Bourmont, in a warning voice, "not one word of this. I am here to stay until the Day of Judgment, if need be. Nothing would induce me to desert his Royal Highness, Charles Philippe, Comte d'Artois. I have no intention what-

## Lady Betty Stair

ever of running away." Here De Bourmont smiled cunningly.

"I understand you perfectly," gravely answered Lady Betty. "You want permission offered you by his Royal Highness."

And then De Bourmont asked, "Shall you be sorry when I am gone?"

"No," said Lady Betty, looking him bravely in the eye, but the blood dropped swiftly out of her fair face.

Four days after that was the grand ball. Lady Betty and De Bourmont were much together in that time, and they were seen whispering to one another so often and so intimately that those who could see farther into a millstone than most people, confidently predicted that "something would come of it."

De Bourmont had some qualms about the coming ball, when Lady Betty and Flora Mackenzie would be brought face to face. He was not vain enough to think for one moment

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that either of them was in love with him ; but he apprehended Lady Betty's fine scorn when she found out, as she certainly would, that he had pursued his acquaintance with the lawyer's daughter in the new town.

De Bourmont had one of those generous temperaments that can be upon the verge of falling in love with two women at once. And Flora Mackenzie was very beautiful, — even more so than the daughter of the Macdonalds of Stair, — and De Bourmont was in love with beauty wherever he found it. However, he consoled himself with this reflection : “ I shall soon be out of it all. No more balls for me. I shall soon be marching and fighting as a true Frenchman should be at this time.”

The night of the great ball arrived, and when De Bourmont and Lady Betty went together to the anteroom of the Comte d'Artois and his princess to attend them, De Bourmont felt very much in love with Lady Betty's beauty.

## Lady Betty Stair

She had no fine gowns, but she had the whitest neck and the brightest eyes, and across her slender figure was draped the silk tartan of the Macdonalds, which she wore as proudly as if it were the ribbon of the Garter. If Lady Betty felt any regret at the coming parting, of which she was the only soul in Holyrood that knew anything, she very bravely hid it,—for De Bourmont was chagrined and half offended at the air of careless happiness that she wore.

The company was assembled in the long ball-room, which blazed with wax lights. At eight o'clock most of the guests had arrived, the gentlemen wearing swords as part of their full dress, and the ladies mostly in ringlets. A dais, covered with crimson cloth, with a canopy over it, and two armchairs for the royal pair, was erected at the upper end of the room. At the lower end a band was stationed which played Scotch versions of "L'air Henri Quatre," "Gavotte de Louis XI.," and other



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French compositions that referred to the Bourbons. Dancing did not begin until after their Royal Highnesses had come and gone; but at ten minutes past eight precisely the Comte d'Artois, magnificently dressed in some old finery that he had saved from Versailles, and his Savoyard wife, Marie Thérèse, upon his arm, made a solemn entry, and proceeded up the long ball-room, bowing right and left to the ladies and gentlemen who lined the way to the dais. They were not a very royal looking pair, but very good-natured and amiable. Lady Betty Stair held up the princess's great train of flowered satin, while De Bourmont walked next her, after the Comte d'Artois. De Bourmont was secretly wondering how this ball would turn out for him; and no man can be at ease who has two women in his mind. Lady Betty looked very demure, — she was always very demure when she was not very saucy, — and she was not less pretty for a concealed agitation

## Lady Betty Stair

that she had felt ever since she knew that De Bourmont was "riding for a fall" from royal favor.

The royal party made a very slow and stately progress toward the dais, the jewelled feathers in the princess's head-dress nodding gravely and incessantly, and presently they reached the dais and the princess seated herself, her train being very carefully spread out by Lady Betty, who then took her stand behind the royal chair. De Bourmont was behind the Comte d'Artois's chair, and he and Lady Betty exchanged little nods and looks that took the place of conversation, which etiquette forbade during the performance of the solemn and arduous duty of standing up behind the chairs of princes and princesses.

Then all the ladies and gentlemen advanced in the order of their rank and paid their respects. Most of them were known to the little circle at Holyrood; but presently there was a sort of hush, — the beautiful Flora Mackenzie,

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tall, superbly dressed, was approaching with her father and mother, and scarcely ten persons in the room knew who she was. She walked quite calmly and sedately behind the counsellor, who had Mistress Mackenzie upon his arm. The older woman was finely gowned, as became a rich man's wife, and blazed with diamonds. Flora had on a rich white brocaded satin, very unlike the simple muslins and gauzes that were all the young girls of the exiled court could afford, and around her neck was a great string of pearls. As she approached, Lady Betty so far forgot etiquette as to whisper to De Bourmont:

"Who is she?"

"Miss Mackenzie," answered De Bourmont, feeling as guilty as if he had stolen something.

Lady Betty flashed him a look of scorn and jealousy and pain that was indescribable. She felt quite sure that he had got them their invitation; and Flora's beauty and her noble figure and

## Lady Betty Stair

her string of pearls went like a dagger to Lady Betty's quivering heart. The counsellor and his wife made their bows with dignity and without any air of servility; but Flora made hers with matchless grace, and looked as composedly at their Royal Highnesses as if she had been a Montmorenci or a De Rohan, instead of a lawyer's daughter from the new town. It was a great sensation. Bastien, who was responsible for it all, sat back in a corner and smiled like Mephistopheles. He had paid off several old scores by getting that invitation, which had required some diplomacy and some secrecy. He knew women well enough to understand that Lady Betty, in her heart, at once taxed De Bourmont with having got the Mackenzies to the levee. De Bourmont did not know in the least how the old counsellor would take it that a man should introduce himself into another man's house under an assumed character, but at the moment that Counsel-

## The History of the

lor Mackenzie caught De Bourmont's glance, a twinkle came into the old Scotchman's eye. He had found out that De Bourmont was a gentleman and had charged him with it, and here he was, one of the first gentlemen in the royal suite. De Bourmont's eyes twinkled, too, as he bowed and smiled at the counsellor. Mistress Mackenzie gave him a bow of delighted recognition, but her heart jumped into her mouth; here she had been treating a gentleman-in-waiting on royalty exactly as if he had been a mere ordinary French teacher. Only Flora looked at him so calmly and loftily that no one would have dreamed that they had ever met before.

De Bourmont could not leave his post until the royalties saw fit to retire, and that was not until nearly midnight.

Lady Betty spoke no more to him that evening. She often played at haughtiness with him, and it was a joke of De Bourmont's to complain to

## Lady Betty Stair

the princess of Lady Betty's unkindness to him, when she would be called up and be gravely admonished ; at which she would say such droll things that the princess would laugh heartily,— and the poor princess had only too few things to make her laugh. De Bourmont whispered to Lady Betty, therefore : —

“ If you are so cruel to me, I shall report you to the princess ; ” but Lady Betty flashed him such a look of anger that he said no more to her.

A man will not stand much of that sort of thing, so, as soon as their Royal Highnesses retired, De Bourmont left Lady Betty and, rather ostentatiously, sought out the Mackenzies. The counsellor burst out laughing when De Bourmont appeared.

“ So, Monsieur de Bourmont,” he said, “ you are a gentleman, after all ! ”

“ But it is not my fault,” answered De Bourmont, with his usual air of well-bred impudence. “ I was born

## The History of the

so, without anybody's asking me if I wished to be a gentleman or not. I had no choice at all."

The counsellor was not very deeply offended with him for masquerading as a tutor, although De Bourmont explained to them that the money did not go amiss, as he was uncommonly in need of it. And all of them laughed at De Bourmont's plea of poverty, which, although very real, he always put in such an amusing way that people could not but smile.

Then De Bourmont, who had not said a word to Flora, asked her to join in the quadrille which was then being formed. She simply bowed silently, and he led her to a place in the dance; and there, as soon as he looked up, he saw Lady Betty Stair and Bastien standing up to dance opposite them.

It was then too late to retreat, and, besides, De Bourmont would not seem to run away from either Lady Betty or Bastien. The two girls looked

## Lady Betty Stair

haughtily at each other. In Lady Betty's eyes was a cool, fine-lady air of scorn which was not wasted on the lawyer's daughter. Flora asked De Bourmont carelessly who Lady Betty was, and, in spite of his cool and self-possessed manner, she shrewdly guessed out in an instant something very near the truth, and returned Lady Betty's look of haughty contempt with interest.

The dance began. De Bourmont noticed Bastien whispering in Lady Betty's ear and laughing, and he saw the blood mount slowly but redly into her clear cheek. Bastien was telling some story about him — probably more about the wager — to Lady Betty. And he caught something about "a great fortune," in the turn of the dance — for Flora Mackenzie was a very great fortune. Lady Betty carefully avoided De Bourmont's eye, and once, when in the dance their hands met and he gave her fingers a faint pressure, she looked



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into his eyes with such an air of cold surprise that he dared not repeat it.

At last the ball was over, and De Bourmont and Lady Betty, each angry, chagrined, and burning with love for the other, parted, after having plagued each other exquisitely for the whole evening.

## Lady Betty Stair

### III

“ I WILL not forgive him. No, I will not. I do not like his conduct with the lawyer’s daughter who has forty thousand pounds.” So said Lady Betty Stair to herself many times a day; yet within a week, after a five minutes’ talk with De Bourmont in the embrasure of a window, they both came forth with happy, glorified faces, and De Bourmont was indeed forgiven. He had told her that the Comte d’Artois had “voluntarily” given him permission to return to France and he only awaited a chance of a vessel sailing for Brittany, which was the only coast in France where a royalist could land without being clapped into prison before he had time to explain why he came. And then, looking searchingly at Lady Betty, De Bourmont had said : —

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“I cannot tell the woman I love, that I love her, until I have my sword in my hand — but then —! Lady Betty, if I leave a letter for you when I go away, will you read it?”

“Yes,” answered Lady Betty, blushing and trembling very much.

And so it came that their faces had a look of Paradise in them. This was not the French way of proceeding, but the Scotch way; and it was De Bourmont’s fixed opinion that the Scotch way was best.

Only a few weeks more passed before De Bourmont left for France, but in that time many strange things happened. The first was, the news that Bastien had been left a considerable fortune, not in assignats, but in good English gold. Lady Betty, who could not forbear once in a while whetting her wit on Bastien, made him a laughing-stock the very night the great news came, while the ladies and gentlemen were awaiting in the salon the coming

## Lady Betty Stair

of their Royal Highnesses. Everybody was congratulating Bastien, and when it came to Lady Betty's turn she said, courtesying low : —

“A thousand congratulations, Monsieur Bastien, and don't be *too* generous with your fortune. You are not called upon to spend it *all* in the service of the royal cause, as the Macdonalds of Stair did with the Stuart cause.”

As Bastien was notoriously close with his money and had got more out of exiled royalty than he ever gave it, these words caused a smile to go around the circle, — not even Abbé de Ronceray being entirely free from suspicion, — and Bastien longed to clap his hand over Lady Betty's rosy mouth.

A curious thing happened to Bastien at this time. When he had been nearly penniless, he had thought it both wicked and absurd that he should feel so acutely the fascination of a penniless Scotch girl like Lady Betty, and when he

## The History of the

had twenty thousand pounds, it seemed still more wicked and absurd. And as money seeks money, his thoughts turned instantly to Flora Mackenzie.

A few days after this, Counsellor Mackenzie made his way up the stairs of the gloomy palace, and on asking for De Bourmont was shown into the ante-room reserved for the gentlemen-in-waiting. There sat De Bourmont, who was delighted to see the honest counsellor.

“My friend,” presently said old Mackenzie, fixing his clear blue eyes on De Bourmont, “I have startling news in my family. Monsieur Bastien has asked for the hand of my daughter Flora.”

De Bourmont was surprised; this was quick work.

“And I have come to ask your opinion of this same Bastien, who” — here the counsellor brought his stick down on the floor with a thwack — “I believe to be as arrant a knave as God’s sun shines on!”

## Lady Betty Stair

De Bourmont laughed at this novel way of asking advice.

“I have nothing against Monsieur Bastien,” he replied, “and if I had, I could not mention it, being a fellow exile with him.”

“Not to save my child?”

“My dear counsellor, I know of no man better able to take care of your lovely daughter than you are.”

“Then you will say nothing one way or the other?”

“Not a word.”

“That settles it,” responded the counsellor, getting upon his sturdy legs, “he shall not have my child. I beg your pardon for speaking ill of your fellow countryman, but, to my mind, Bastien has the word ‘rogue’ writ large all over him — and is a — supercilious dog besides! Could you have seen the air with which he asked for the honor of paying his addresses to Miss Mackenzie — very well — very well — I’ll be ready for this Monsieur

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Bastien when he comes to-morrow to get his answer."

"My faith! I would not be in Bastien's shoes," said De Bourmont, laughing; but becoming grave, he asked, "How does Miss Mackenzie stand toward him?"

"Hanged if I know," responded Miss Mackenzie's candid father, "good-morning." And the counsellor, being a man of his word, Bastien got his *congé* the very next day.

The ladies and gentlemen in waiting, having little to amuse them during the long days and longer evenings, got hold of Bastien's unsuccessful suit, and gave him many a sly dig as he walked about, frowning and abstracted, and always thinking about his money. And Lady Betty, being a rash creature, was not behindhand in this sly sort of chaff, so that in a little while Bastien began to hate her a good deal harder than he had ever loved her. And then, he was fully persuaded that he owed his ill luck with

## Lady Betty Stair

Flora Mackenzie to De Bourmont, and privately resolved to get even with him.

Meanwhile, as Bastien grew richer, De Bourmont grew poorer, and suddenly the tradesmen he owed became very pressing in their attentions. Being ignorant of the Scotch law of debtors, De Bourmont listened very attentively when Lady Betty described to their Royal Highnesses in the great salon, one evening, that peculiar institution of Holyrood Palace concerning "abbey lairds."

"This palace remains still a sanctuary for debtors," she said, "and any honest debtor, pursued by his creditors, who can reach that place outside the gate called the Strand, is safe from arrest as long as he remains within the demesne of Holyrood; and on Sunday he may walk abroad anywhere he likes, without fear of molestation. My father has told me that in his day it was a common enough thing to claim sanctuary here, and to see a man fleeing toward Holyrood was sure to start a



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rabble at his heels, all, however, apt to be partisans of the fugitive, — for the people rather like to have the bailiffs outrun. Sanctuary is sometimes claimed now ; but, as my father said, the devil is not so strong as he was forty years ago, and debtors are more honest, or creditors more careful whom they trust.”

Their Royal Highnesses listened and laughed, as did the Abbé de Ronceray, with whom Betty, for all her sauciness, was a great favorite ; but the most interested among all the hearers was Bastien. He made so many and such minute inquiries about it that Betty asked him very innocently : —

“Why, Monsieur Bastien, are *you* thinking of claiming sanctuary ?”

It was only a few nights after that when De Bourmont, walking down the Cowgate in the moonlight and thinking of his proposed departure to France and of Lady Betty, and wondering how long it would be before he could come back

## Lady Betty Stair

and claim her, presently found two or three men slipping out of the dark "closes" on either side, and apparently following him. De Bourmont quickened his pace, and his mysterious friends quickened theirs. De Bourmont broke into a run — so did his unknown friends.

"Bailiffs, by all that's holy!" said De Bourmont to himself; and then, remembering Lady Betty's story, he laid his heels to the ground for Holyrood. A pack of idlers, standing on the street, suddenly sent up a cry: "Bailiffs! and he's makkin' for the palace!"

Straightway they all started in full cry after him. Not all of them really wanted to see him caught, — indeed, they rather impeded the bailiffs in the chase; they merely wanted to be in at the dénouement. Windows were flung up as the scurrying, shouting crowd followed after De Bourmont's flying figure. A friendly voice, evidently belonging to some one who recognized

## The History of the

one of the exiles of Holyrood, shouted.  
“Gang it, Frenchy!”

This still further inclined the crowd toward De Bourmont, as, with swift justice, it was felt to be a peculiarly unhandsome thing to molest exiles and strangers within their gates. De Bourmont began to perceive that the mob was on his side, — always an exhilarating knowledge, — and he ran still faster toward the great gloomy pile that rose before him in the white glow of the moon. Windows in the palace were being raised, and two heads belonging to their two Royal Highnesses were seen at the great windows that face the Cowgate, watching the flight and the pursuit, which became exciting enough, with yells, shrieks, and laughter, — for these were occasions for public mirth. The palace courtyard was full of people, who overflowed beyond the gate, but who were careful to leave a clear space for the fugitive, now rapidly approaching. All the ladies-in-waiting had got

## Lady Betty Stair

permission to run down the stone stairs to see the sight, which was so excruciatingly humorous from the Edinburgh point of view, and Lady Betty was among them. As the flying figure neared the line of demarcation a great cry went up in English, French, and Scotch: "Hurrah!" "Brava!" "Weel done!" Everybody, clearly, was against the bailiffs, one of whom was almost on De Bourmont's heels,—for Lady Betty, recognizing him, had shrieked out, "'T is Monsieur de Bourmont!" The bailiff put out his arm and caught De Bourmont by the shoulder as the two crossed the line together, and then they both tumbled over in a heap, De Bourmont's head and body well within the line, but his legs outside of it.

A loud groan went up, — the crowd thought De Bourmont had lost, — and some one came running down the palace stairs laughing stridently. It was Bastien. The other bailiff had then fallen upon De Bourmont, and all three were

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struggling fiercely on the ground. Suddenly Lady Betty Stair advanced a step or two and cried out, in a shrill, sweet voice : —

“ Let him go, you wretched bailiffs. Do you not know the law ? If the debtor’s head falls over the line, as this gentleman’s did, he is safe, for the head is the noblest part of the body. And let him go, this instant, I say ! ”

A ringing cheer broke from the crowd, and a brawny Scotchman, taking hold of the uppermost bailiff, threw him aside like a bale of wool, saying gruffly :

“ Dinna ye hear the leddy ? ”

The officers of the law, more out of respect to the temper of the mob than to Lady Betty’s words, let De Bourmont rise, who made her a low bow, and then proceeded to carefully dust his clothes. At this the crowd sent up a great cheer for Lady Betty, who, turning a beautiful rosy red, said to De Bourmont :

“ Monsieur, you have lost your only chance of being a laird of Scotland, — a



“Let him go, you wretched bailiffs!”

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## Lady Betty Stair

not inconsiderable honor. Do you not know the good old song ? ” Whereupon she sang, in a thrilling, sweet voice :

“ When, bankrupt frae care,  
The fools are set free,  
Then we mak’ them all lairds  
Of the Abbey, you see.”

The crowd then, quite wild with admiration for her beauty and spirit, shouted wildly for “ Stair’s bonny lassie ; ” until Lady Betty, redder than the rose, flew back into the courtyard and up the stairs to her own room. The people then dispersed, well pleased with their evening’s entertainment, and guying the bailiffs, who went away sheepishly enough, followed by the multitude hooting and “ heckling ” them.

Next day the town rang with De Bourmont’s adventure and Lady Betty Stair’s share in it. It was rather embarrassing for De Bourmont, but Counsellor Mackenzie, hearing of it, came to the palace, and after ha-ha-ing over it plentifully with De Bourmont, cried : —



## The History of the

"Now, let me see the bills of those rascally tradesmen, who know not how to treat a stranger and a gentleman that has fallen upon evil days."

De Bourmont produced his bills, which the counsellor examined. Every now and then a great roar of anger would burst from him, and finally he rose, shouting: "Thieves! cut-throats! highwaymen they are! You have been most cruelly swindled, Monsieur de Bourmont, and I will make these villains atone their overcharges; and I ask the honor of advancing you the money to pay what you owe, and you may return it when you like."

"Sir," replied De Bourmont, "I have spent my lifetime with kings and princes, but never saw I a more royal heart and mind than yours. And I accept of your generosity as gladly as you offer it."

The next day the counsellor returned with a batch of receipted bills.

"And I can tell you who was at the bottom of that chase along the Cowgate.

## Lady Betty Stair

"T was your precious friend Bastien, who told abroad that you were about leaving secretly for France."

"The devil!" cried De Bourmont.

He went in hot haste to the anteroom of the gentlemen-in-waiting, and there sat Bastien at a table, playing patience, while two gentlemen of the suite lounged in a window. De Bourmont went up to Bastien and watched him silently while he worked out his game. Then he said :

"Lend me the cards, Monsieur Bastien. I know a trick worth two of that you are doing."

Bastien handed him the cards, and De Bourmont, collecting them carefully together, promptly dashed them full in Bastien's face. "That is for talking with my tradesmen," he cried.

Of course, next morning, they went out at sunrise to a quiet place near Arthur's Seat, and lunged at each other for the best part of an hour. De Bourmont escaped with a scratch or two, but Bastien came in for a smart rip in his

## The History of the

arm, and — worse luck — for a slight cut across his unfortunate nose, after which the whole party went back to town for breakfast.

De Bourmont had meant to keep it all from Lady Betty, but she got it out of him before twenty-four hours. She was full of contempt, saying : —

“For you to fight Bastien ! You ought to have seen him that morning, seven years ago, at Versailles !” and then with blushes and sighs and smiles and lamentings over her own unruly temper, she told him the history of her assault on Bastien’s nose. De Bourmont laughed until he cried, and then, looking at Lady Betty, saw her speaking eyes watching him so gravely — nay, tenderly — that he suddenly stopped laughing and, seizing her hand, cried : —

“Ah, Mademoiselle, nothing but my duty to my country could drag me away from this or any other place, were it the dreariest on earth, so long as you are there.”

## Lady Betty Stair

Now, Lady Betty was rash, very rash, and, having decided in her own mind that Bastien had long since forgotten that little encounter with her green fan, it suited her to say to him, when she met him alone soon afterward in the corridor :

“La ! what has happened to your poor nose ? ”

It was only a little thing, but it was one of a long list that he had against her, and he hated De Bourmont, and saw in an instant that Lady Betty knew what had happened. And an evil thought came into his mind and straightway left his lips.

“Lady Betty Stair,” he said, “I believe that you and the gentleman who gave me this scratch think to be something more than friends ; but you never can.” Lady Betty turned pale with rage at Bastien’s impertinence, and, for once, her nimble tongue and ready wit failed her. Bastien followed up his advantage.

“Do you want to know why ? Be-

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cause your brother's blood is on De Bourmont's hands. Your lover, Mademoiselle, killed your brother."

At this Lady Betty stepped up quite close to Bastien, and looking him full in the eye, said quietly : —

"I do not believe you, Monsieur Bastien."

Bastien shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you not remember, Mademoiselle, the very first night you came to this place, while we were at supper in De Bourmont's room, he said : 'I was the Abbé de Ronceray's first penitent, and I made him a confession that kept him awake, I can tell you' ?"

Yes, Lady Betty remembered it perfectly, but she would not acknowledge it to Bastien ; she merely turned to go, with a look of ineffable contempt at him. Bastien, however, placed himself in her way so that she could not pass, and continued speaking : —

"The Abbé de Ronceray's first penitent was a murderer — and the murderer,

## Lady Betty Stair

as you would call it, of Angus Macdonald. You are sharp of wit, Lady Betty; you can find out all about this from the Abbé de Ronceray, without his suspecting what you are trying to learn. Trust a woman to ferret out what a man has no mind to tell her!"

"Monsieur Bastien," said Lady Betty, in the same quiet voice in which she had first spoken, "you have offered me several affronts during the last few minutes, but the last is the greatest,—as if I could be induced to follow your advice in the smallest matter in the world! I shall lay the matter before their Royal Highnesses, and you will excuse me for declining your acquaintance hereafter,"—and Lady Betty walked off majestically.

This threat frightened Bastien. Being a trickster himself, he did not understand the directness of a straightforward nature, and could not persuade himself that Lady Betty would do so daring a thing as to appeal to the poor royalties they both served; still, he was unde-

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niably nervous about it. As for Lady Betty, she was in such a storm of rage that she scarcely knew what she felt; but after the first palpitations of wrath, she hit upon one thing which completely reassured her. De Bourmont knew she was Angus Macdonald's sister, and would he, knowing there was a bloody grave between them, offer her his love? Never!

But it is one thing to feel sure, and another thing to be certain. She wished and longed, with an extreme yearning, that she could hear some one deny the story. Of course she would not condescend to take Bastien's advice and ask the Abbé de Ronceray, and she thought it a sharp trick of Bastien's to suggest that she should do this, very well knowing she would not. At all events, she would put it out of her mind and never think of it again. Of that much she was certain.

But of course she did not. She thought of it all that day. The thought walked by her side, and whispered in her

## Lady Betty Stair

ear, and lay down with her, and rose with her. Nevertheless, she did not once lose her courage, and resolving to show Bastien how little of a coward she was, that night she dressed her lovely form in the only splendid gown she had, — something white and shimmering, — and with her fair neck bare, and her eyes brilliant and restless, she looked so handsome in her glass that she was thrilled from head to foot with gratified vanity.

As she came daintily stepping down the stair, by the light of two candles in the lobby, she found De Bourmont waiting at the foot.

“Dear lady,” he said, “this is the night I go. The ship waits at Leith for the tide, and at midnight I take post to join her. And will you, as you promised, read the letter I shall leave for you?”

Lady Betty, blushing and trembling, made him a low courtesy, saying in a soft voice: —



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“With pleasure.”

“And will you not kindly look out of your window on the courtyard at twelve o’clock, when I shall be leaving? And if I see a light there, ’t will be an illumination to my soul until we meet again.”

“Until we meet again,” whispered Lady Betty. At that moment there was the faint cry of a nightbird outside under the eaves — so faint that only sharp ears could have heard it at all. Lady Betty, who was as full of superstition as a whole clan of Highlanders might be, turned a little pale.

“Hear that!” she said. “It is a bad omen, I am afraid. You know there never was any fortunate love in this old palace; there seems to be a blight upon it.”

At which De Bourmont, respectfully taking her hand, — for it was in a ceremonious age, — answered, smiling, “Well, I have a presentiment — a presentiment that I shall one day have the bliss of looking into those dear eyes again.”



*Forster*

“Dear lady, this is the night I go.”

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## Lady Betty Stair

They were getting on quite fast in the Scotch fashion of courtship, when a tall figure in a cassock loomed before them, and the Abbé de Ronceray's voice called out peremptorily : —

“ Marie — Pierre — loitering here at this time of night ? Oh, I beg you ten thousand pardons, Mademoiselle, and you, too, Monsieur de Bourmont. My eyesight is so bad — I took you at first for Marie, the maid, who is always being followed by my footboy, Pierre — the rascal is in love with her.”

The Abbé looked around blandly — Lady Betty was blushing, and De Bourmont was laughing — it was too bad ! Lady Betty, turning her back on De Bourmont, walked on toward the salon and passed through the broad folding doors and the Abbé followed her. It was early yet — not quite nine o'clock — when the royalties usually entered the salon after dinner. No one was there but themselves.

“ I am afraid I was a little awkward

## The History of the

just now," began the Abbé, good-humoredly. "I have spent so much more of my life in camps than in courts, that I cannot altogether learn the soft ways of people about a court. Sometimes I scold Pierre so loudly that I disturb the slumbers of their Royal Highnesses themselves."

Here was a chance to ask a question or two — after having solemnly sworn she would not.

"Your first duties as a priest must have seemed strange, — confessions, for example, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"Very strange they seemed. I was ordained the morning of the day that the mob entered Versailles, and before night I had heard my first penitent confess that he had killed a man."

Lady Betty knew well enough how the secrets of the confessional were guarded, but in spite of herself, she burst out, leaning toward the Abbé:

"And he killed Angus Macdonald of the Scottish Guard!"

## Lady Betty Stair

The Abbé de Ronceray, although soldier, courtier, and priest in one, was thoroughly disconcerted. He turned pale and then red. His lips opened to speak, but no word came forth. A duller mind than Lady Betty's must have seen that she had hit the white.

"It is not worth while for you to try and deceive me," cried Lady Betty, with tears pouring down her pale face, "I know—I know it all—Angus Macdonald was my brother—my only brother!"

The Abbé, much agitated, sank back in his chair. It is a very terrible thing for a priest to reveal, even inadvertently, the secrets of the confessional. He is pledged to die first—and many have died rather than reveal confessions. He was a straightforward man, accustomed to a soldierly plainness of speech. He knew not what to say, and could not restrain a slight groan, and this was the confirmation of Lady Betty's

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fears. They had been quite alone until then, but the folding doors opened and several persons came in. Seeing the Abbé and Lady Betty sitting in silence at the other end of the room and plainly deeply moved, no one approached them. Lady Betty, rising quickly, said to him, in a broken voice : —

“ You did not mean to tell ; it was one of those dreadful coincidences that no one can guard against. But for me — it breaks my heart ! it breaks my heart ! ” and without another word, she slipped away so quickly and noiselessly that she might have been one of the ghosts in that ghostly palace.

It was some hours afterward that Lady Betty, coming out of a dream as it were, found herself sitting on the steps of Queen Mary's Bathhouse, at a distance from the palace. The night was raw and damp, and through a gloomy haze she could see the faint glimmer of lights below her in the town, and above her the great sombre

## Lady Betty Stair

pile of the palace, with here and there a gleaming window. All was strangely still, and the only distinct sound was the regular step of the sentry as he paced back and forth on the pathway above her. She wondered dully to herself how she managed to elude him, —for her present place was beyond the confines of the palace proper,—and how long had she been sitting in that dismal place? She remembered having on a white gown, which must have been visible even in the dusk of night. But to her surprise, as she came slowly out of the maze of pain and wonder, she realized that she was wrapped in her plaid, although her head was bare and she still had on her white satin slippers. She drew the plaid around her and cowered where she sat in the gloom, leaning her head against one of the stone pillars. The palace clock tolled out eleven. De Bourmont was to leave at twelve. He would wait as long as he could in the courtyard, hoping to see a



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light in her window. At that very moment he was searching for her, to give her the letter she had promised to take. And all the time he had known that Angus Macdonald was her brother! She could recall a dozen times that she had spoken of him, and De Bourmont's face had been so tenderly sympathetic — he had seemed to feel so deeply for this terrible tragedy of her early life; and he knew, he knew so much more than she could tell him. As this thought struck her she uttered a half-articulate cry of anguish, that broke off suddenly. The sentry alone paused in his walk, listened and looked about, then, perfect silence succeeding, resumed his steady tramp. No other sound broke the quiet of the night.

At twelve o'clock the guard would be relieved, and a few minutes before, a dark figure crossed the sentry's beat. The man cried "Halt!" and advancing at a run, seized hold of Lady Betty Stair, who turned on him a face so

## Lady Betty Stair

white and desperate that he almost dropped his musket. He recognized her in a moment, and anything more awkward for him never happened. Was he to take Lady Betty Stair to the guard-house? He began some blundering questions, holding on to her at the time, and she, looking into his eyes quietly, and remaining quite mute, as if she did not quite understand what he was saying, suddenly dropped the plaid, melting, as it were, out of the man's grasp, and ran quickly and noiselessly toward the palace. The sentry was immensely relieved. He picked the plaid up and determined to make a clean breast of it to his officer. But he could not get over the uncanny look on Lady Betty's face.

"Poor soul!" he said to himself over and over again. "Poor soul! she had the look and the walk of a ghost,—and of a tormented ghost, at that."

And at that moment de Bourmont

## The History of the

with a sore heart, was on his way toward Leith, to embark for France. For there had been no light in Lady Betty's window, and there was no letter of his in her hand.

## Lady Betty Stair

### IV

IT was more than a year after, that, one sunny August day, the Abbé de Ronceray alighted from the diligence as it stopped before the great stone gate of a white-walled convent in Provence. The air was soft, as Provence air is, and the sky was of a deep, deep blue, against which the masses of purplish woods showed darkly. The road was white and clean, and over everything grew roses of a rich red and a richer white and the palest pink,—all rioting in the beauty of the summer time.

The abbé had aged a little in that year, but his eyes were as kind as ever, and his carriage as soldierlike. He walked slowly down the avenue lined with tall Lombardy poplars, standing in ranks, like soldiers, toward the low, rambling convent building. There was

## The History of the

a sweet stillness over everything, — that peculiar quiet and absence of alarms which characterizes places from which the tumultuous world is excluded. The abbé's thoughts were decidedly optimistic. The country had quieted down under the rule of the Corsican, and the abbé had no doubt, like all the rest of the Bourbon followers, that, after Napoleon's day, France would again call for her rightful king, and he pleased himself mightily with the notion. Meanwhile, it was pleasanter living in France, even under the Corsican's rule, than anywhere on earth, — for exile is hard upon your true Frenchman. He had served his term of duty with the Comte d'Artois, and had been heartily glad when he was excused from further attendance, for a time at least, and some other patient abbé had taken his place.

As he neared the open door in the middle of the sunny, whitewashed convent walls, he began to be a little eager respecting the person he was to see.

## Lady Betty Stair

“Who would have thought Lady Betty Stair would ever be a religious! She seemed born to be of a court — her little feet seemed made for white satin slippers only, and dancing was more natural to her than walking. Ah, those Highland dances she used to do so like a sprite — and De Bourmont —”

The abbé shook his head and sighed. That chance word he let fall that night at Holyrood lay heavy on his conscience. He had made a long journey to confess it, and when told he had committed no sin, only an unfortunate inadvertence, his conscience was not altogether eased. For many years he had harbored no suspicion of the identity of the man who came to him that October evening in 1789, and in darkness and in whispers confessed having run Angus Macdonald through the body, when called to account for some slight to the Scotchman's young sister. Of late, though, he was haunted by the thought that it was Bastien. Lady Betty Stair evi-

## The History of the

dently knew who it was, but her cry, "My heart is broken!" seemed grotesquely out of place concerning Bastien, whom she notoriously hated. Being well skilled in the human heart, the abbé had seen how things were in the old days between De Bourmont and Lady Betty Stair; but, like everybody else, he was astounded when Lady Betty quietly left Holyrood, a few days after De Bourmont's departure, and the next heard of her, she had entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy. Scarcely less of a change had come over De Bourmont, — he, once the most careless, debonair young spirit in the world, — now, a silent, serious, determined soldier, without a hope or an aspiration beyond his duty. It was all very puzzling, and the abbé had not cleared it up when he pulled the convent bell and heard it clang through the building in the quiet of the August afternoon. The abbé, bowing low to the portress, asked to see the superior, and was

## Lady Betty Stair

shown into the convent parlor to await her. It was so calm, so peaceful — and there were so many roses ! They even climbed through the window, and their laughing faces peered over the stone sill. Presently the superior entered, and she and the abbé, having known each other long before the troubles, were delighted to meet once more ; and to show her appreciation of the honor of the visit she took him into the convent garden, where a lay sister served seed cake and mulberry wine to him. The abbé crumbled his cake and made a heroic effort to drink the wine ; but it was too much for his politeness and his charity combined. However, the superior, intent on hearing of all their mutual friends, did not remark this. After a while the abbé said : —

“ I desire, after paying my respects to you, dear mother, to see Sister Claire, who is also an old friend of mine, despite the difference in our ages. She was in attendance upon their Royal Highnesses



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at Holyrood, and she was then Lady Betty Stair."

"Ah, Sister Claire! Well, Monsieur l'Abbé, I can only say that the more of those fine ladies who come to us, the better. They have already served so hard an apprenticeship to the rule of the world, that ours seems simple enough to them. They find the hardest life of a religious easy by comparison with what society exacted of them. They always turn out our bravest sisters; they fear nothing."

The abbé nodded his head with pleased approval at this.

"True, very true. It was not of the world that it was said, 'For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.'"

"And Sister Claire is no exception to the rest. She is so courageous—ready to do anything, to go anywhere—depend upon it, Monsieur l'Abbé, there is something in blood, after all."

The mother superior said this as if it were a highly original remark, and

## Lady Betty Stair

the abbé smiled,— he felt sure, whatever Lady Betty Stair professed to be, she was that with all her heart. And in a little while the mother superior arose to send Sister Claire to him, and presently he heard a quick, light step tripping down the flagged walk under the lilac-trees behind him. It gave him a weird sensation ; he felt as if he were in the long gallery at Holyrood, and Lady Betty Stair was tripping toward him in little high-heeled red slippers, and she would appear before him in a moment in a gay little white gown, and make him a low curtesy as in the old days ; and he did not come out of his day dream until he saw Sister Claire standing close by him, her face framed in white, and her graceful figure not wholly concealed by the habit of the Sisters of Mercy.

The abbé's first idea was, that Lady Betty had grown taller and more beautiful than he could ever have dreamed. In place of her charming prettiness was

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a lofty and touching beauty. Her old spirit was not gone,—there was the same gleam in her eyes, the same color in her cheeks, but glorified by the dignity of self-sacrifice. She was so glad to see the abbé that she squeezed his hand tightly in her two small palms; and then sat down by him on the bench. Both of them were a little shaken, and a diamond drop or two hung upon Sister Claire's lashes.

“How kind you were to come!” she cried; and the abbé noticed, even in her voice, the magic change. It had always been sweet, but now it was thrilling. And he felt sure, in one minute, that whatever might have been the storms through which she had passed, now, at least, she was at peace.

“Tell me about yourself, my child,” he asked.

“There is not much to tell—only, that I have to-day obtained the desire of my heart. I have always longed to

## Lady Betty Stair

help our dear, brave soldiers in the field, and I was so afraid I would be made to teach, or to nurse the rich when they are ill, or something really hard. But to-day it is settled — I am to be with an ambulance — not in charge — for I have no experience yet — but I am to do what I have longed to do. I think my fighting blood must make me yearn to help our poor soldiers, — and God has been so good to me in letting me do it.”

“I congratulate you, my child. Nothing is nobler or more useful. You will perhaps find many old acquaintances among the officers, who will be of help to you.”

“I shall make them all help me,” she cried, nodding her head very much as of old. Then she began to ask after the Royal Highnesses both of them had served, and after many other persons they both knew. She could give him news of Madame Mirabel, who was well and happy in being

## The History of the

still allowed to follow exiled royalty; and Monsieur Bastien, she said, smiling, had married the widow of a rich contractor. The abbé's tongue was well under control, but his countenance remained expressive. Something in his look told Sister Claire that the subject of Bastien was unpleasing; and then she asked, quite calmly and naturally, "And Monsieur de Bourmont, what has become of him?"

The abbé started a little, but, seeing her quite composed, though a little pale, answered her in the most matter-of-fact way imaginable.

"A major of artillery. He frankly avowed his royalist principles to General Bonaparte, who assured him it should not stand in the way of his promotion, and it has not. But you would scarcely know him now, he is so changed."

"How, Monsieur l'Abbé?" asked Sister Claire, turning still paler, but not losing her calmness.

## Lady Betty Stair

“Grave, quiet, taciturn. You remember what a gay dare-devil he was once? He looks many years older, and in a little more than a year he has grown as gray as I am. He is, however, a useful and brilliant officer.”

“A useful and brilliant officer!” repeated Sister Claire, dreamily. “Then he ought to be content. None of those who live in the world can hope to be more than that.”

Then there was a little pause. The abbé felt a slight awkwardness in speaking of De Bourmont before her who had once been the Lady Betty Stair. And then a new courage leaped into Sister Claire’s glowing eyes, and she said, after a moment : —

“Monsieur l’Abbé, I wish to tell you something about Monsieur de Bourmont, which you may at some time convey to him, and it may give him comfort. You will understand that I ask you to regard what I tell you as a sacred confidence. You remember, no

## The History of the

doubt, the terrible circumstances of the death of my only brother, Angus Macdonald, of the Scottish Guard ? ”

“ Quite well, my child. It was well impressed upon my memory.”

Sister Claire, for the first time, faltered a little, and when she resumed, her voice was tremulous.

“ I never associated Monsieur de Bourmont with that tragedy of my youth until — until just before I left Holyrood Palace. But I found out — quite by accident — one of those terrible accidents of life — that — that — Monsieur de Bourmont killed my brother.” Sister Claire stopped, sighed, and passed her hand over her pale face.

“ But Monsieur de Bourmont did not kill your brother,” replied the abbé, quietly.

Sister Claire shook her head, and said, in a tone of piercing sadness : —

“ Ah, Monsieur l’Abbé, you have forgotten. It was from you yourself I heard the words, ‘ My first penitent

## Lady Betty Stair

was a murderer ;' and the first time I ever saw Monsieur de Bourmont at Holyrood, he said, 'I was the Abbé de Ronceray's first penitent.' "

"He was wrong. He was not my first penitent ; he was my second. I was locked up alone in the room with the murderer when Monsieur de Bourmont arrived, and the confession was made me by that miserable man before Monsieur de Bourmont came near me. He, too, went to confession for the first time in many years, and I recall he said, at the time, that he was my first penitent, — I had been his superior officer, you may remember, — and I did not contradict him ; but it was a mistake."

There was a long pause after this, and the abbé carefully avoided looking at Sister Claire. Presently he continued : —

"I was not present when he made the assertion which so misled you, else I would have contradicted him then."



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A still longer pause followed, and the abbé heard Sister Claire say to herself : —

“ Bastien was the man who killed my brother.”

The old priest seemed not to hear Sister Claire’s words. He only said, in a mildly vexed tone : —

“ How well should one guard the tongue ! And how unguarded was mine ! I think the Evil One must have been at my elbow when I made that indiscreet remark. Forget it, my child ! ”

He still kindly looked away from Sister Claire, and began to speak of resignation under sorrows, and those other commonplaces which wait upon human misery. His voice sounded far away to Sister Claire. It seemed to come from a great distance, — beyond the convent wall, with its wealth of roses ; beyond the fields and the vineyards, where the shadows lay long in the declining sun. After a long, long while,

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some faint words escaped her. She tried to speak calmly, but her words were half-sobbed out : —

“I am glad — more glad than I can say — that Monsieur de Bourmont is not, as I thought, guilty of my brother’s blood. But I think it is right he should know the mistake — the cruel mistake I was under. Tell him so, I beg of you ; and tell him also that I ask his pardon for ever suspecting him of such a thing.”

“I will see him and repeat to him every word you ask me,” replied the abbé.

Then they both rose, and involuntarily walked down the flagged path toward the door. Sister Claire was struggling with her agitation, but she was conquering it. Presently she spoke again.

“When I left Holyrood — suddenly, Monsieur l’Abbé, you may remember — I wrote a few lines of farewell to Monsieur de Bourmont. I did not tell

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him why I left, — he does not know to this day.”

The old abbé knew well enough what her incoherent words meant ; he supplied the meaning without the least trouble. When, at last, he felt it was safe to look at Sister Claire, he began to believe that, after all, nothing could be better than what was. De Bourmont had done heroic things, and Sister Claire would do things equally heroic.

“ Remember, my child,” he said, “ the believer who puts his hand to the plough — ”

“ Let him not look back,” continued Sister Claire, in a thrilling voice. “ Much better — much better to go on. Say to Monsieur de Bourmont that I hope he will be happy ; and I shall not be — unhappy.”

“ No ; you will not be unhappy,” replied the abbé. He was exalted enough to see that Sister Claire had before her a great and useful life, and such people are to be envied, not



“‘Tell him so, I beg of you.’”

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pitied. They stood together at the convent door with clasped hands. It was a solemn parting, for each felt it was for all time.

“Good-by, my child. You will be happy,” were the abbé’s parting words. Sister Claire did not speak, but stood at the door watching his tall, thin, but still soldierly figure as it disappeared down the poplar-bordered lane. Purple shadows were falling upon the landscape, and the scent of the roses grew almost painfully sweet. Sister Claire lifted a pale, glorified face toward the opaline sky, where a new moon hung low, like a silver lamp, and her lips moved in prayer. Suddenly a bell clanged loudly four times behind her. It was her number — she was needed. She turned to go, and met the superior face to face.

“You look pale, sister,” said the superior, kindly. “These visits from the outside world are sometimes agitating. Have you heard bad news?”

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“No, I have not, mother; I have heard very good news,” answered Sister Claire. “A person whom I deeply loved, I thought had been guilty of a crime; and I have this day, this hour, found that he is innocent,” — and she went upon her task with a face like an angel’s.

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### V

SOME Sisters of Mercy have one vocation — some another. Sister Claire's was for helping the private soldiers, nursing them when they were ill, binding up their hurts when they were wounded, comforting them when they were dying, and even scolding them very effectively when they were in the guard-house. This patrician was never more at home than with Jean Baptiste, who marched away from home with a light knapsack and a heavy heart, and who did not always know enough to keep out of the sergeant's black books. It was the Jean Baptistes whom Sister Claire loved, and she was loved in turn by them. She was very gentle with them when they were ill and suffering, — but when drinking and gambling and other wrongdoings came to her



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notice, who could be more severe than Sister Claire ?

“ I am ashamed of you, Jean Baptiste,” she would say sternly to a *vieille moustache*, who had gone through a dozen campaigns scathless, only to be floored at last at the wine-shop. “ You, whom I thought one of the best men in the battalion ! What is to become of the conscripts if the older men act like you ? I have a great mind to leave the army and go back to teaching young ladies the harp in the convent.” Sister Claire had not the remotest idea of doing this, but the awful threat struck fear to the heart of Jean Baptiste. The other sisters were kind — oh, yes — kindness itself — but Sister Claire was the soldier’s friend. The officers admired and respected her, and found Sister Claire’s influence of substantial benefit in the matter of discipline. But with these men of her own class she was more reserved. She was then more Lady Betty Stair than Sister

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Claire of the Sisters of Mercy. By that subtle freemasonry among classes, the officers knew they were associating with a person born to rank and position when dealing with her, and she used this feeling very artfully for the benefit of her poor soldiers. This woman, who would wait on sick Jean Baptiste as if she were his servant, would, unconsciously to herself, wear a grand air when face to face with his officer. She would ask a favor with the calm assumption that it must be done for her, very much as in the old days she would desire a cavalier to pick up her fan; and she would accept it with the graceful condescension of a great lady. She always made her requests in person, shrewdly surmising that to say "no" was more difficult than to write "no;" and it became a joke among the officers how completely they stood in awe of this slight, tranquil little Sister of Mercy. She did not cast down her eyes when she spoke to

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a man as the French sisters did, but looked at them so fully and brightly that the boldest dragoon of them felt like a schoolboy before her.

The rule of the Sisters of Mercy is a strict one; nevertheless, they are very wise women, and if one of their order displays a great and singular aptitude for a thing, she is allowed to follow the path so clearly indicated to her. So it was that Sister Claire never more taught polite accomplishments to young ladies, but worked steadily in her chosen field.

Her first duty almost was with the army in Egypt. She had then an ambulance of her own, and the little canvas-covered wagon was pretty sure to be close up to the line of fire. She went through the whole time of the French occupation of Egypt, including the terrible retreat from Acre, without a scratch or a day's illness; but one of the last shots fired at the retreating French column struck her. The

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wound was severe, but she never lost consciousness while the surgeons were dressing it. All along the dreary road lay the wounded, begging to be carried along with the army and not be suffered to perish on the desert. And their cries and prayers so affected Sister Claire, who implored that they might be taken into her wagon, that the surgeon in charge gave her a dose of opium, which put her to sleep at the time and made her very angry afterwards.

The Napoleonic wars gave her plenty to do. She followed her dear soldiers to Germany, to Spain, and even a part of the way to Russia — she, who had seen the sun rise on the day of Austerlitz, also witnessed the passage of the Beresina. And by means which she never understood, but devoutly thanked God for, she succeeded in getting her ambulance across the river on that dreadful day, and saved the ten wounded men of whom she had charge. It was in the

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days of 1814, though, that she was of the most service. From the battle of Leipsic until the surrender of Paris, there was scarcely a day that she was not under fire. She was wounded three times, but all of her wounds were slight, and she lost little time through them. She was at Waterloo, and after working all night on the field, in the pouring rain, for the first time in her life she fainted away, falling among a heap of dead cuirassiers. When day broke, and the bodies were being removed, she was found there. Groans and sobs of grief went up — when Sister Claire, suddenly sitting up, asked : —

“Are the English in retreat?”

Alas! they were not — though soon Sister Claire was, but meanwhile doing all she could for the wounded among the fugitives.

All this time, no hardened veteran stood fire better than Sister Claire. She adopted that cheerful maxim, —

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"Every bullet has its billet," — and went about her business of binding up wounds and staunching blood as calmly under the dropping fire of musketry, or the roar of artillery, as if she were hearing a catechism class in the convent garden.

And how was it with her heart in all those years? She scarcely knew herself. Only that, whenever a sudden wild agony of regret seized her, when she was tempted to rush up the greatest height she could find and throw herself madly from it into the abyss of death, there was always before her some suffering fellow-creature who needed her services at that very moment; whose pain was so great it could not wait, and she must stay and help that agonized soul and body. She counted among her blessings that, whenever these paroxysms of despair had seized her, there would be the ever-present sufferer; and she came to believe silently, and with a tender and reverent

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superstition, that, like the saint of old who gave his coat to a beggar, and that beggar revealed himself presently as the Man of Sorrows, so was she tending Him in the persons of His poor.

She had not failed to follow De Bourmont's career, and knew every step of promotion he gained, and thrilled with pride at it. As for De Bourmont, from the day he threw his sword into the scale of the Emperor, he scarcely had time to think, for fifteen years. In all those years he had been in active service, and it was not until after Waterloo, where he had been severely wounded, that the march of events in his career stopped long enough for him to look backward and forward at his life. In the long days of his convalescence in the country, he began to examine himself and what lay before and behind him. Like the Abbé de Ronceray, he scarcely recognized himself for what he had been fifteen years before. He was over

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forty, a soldier seasoned in battles, and too old to learn anything else. He had been cruelly disappointed in the first and only deep love of his life, and the memory of Lady Betty Stair was still too dear to him for any other woman to have the mastery of his heart. He had learned from the abbé the whole story of her sudden flight from Holyrood, and, manlike, he could not persuade himself that she could be happy after the sacrifice she had made. He imagined her spending a life of calm seclusion in a convent, and did not suspect that she was almost as much of a soldier as himself; and, like her, he came in time to feel that there was but one life before him, — a life of duty. His career in the army had been brilliant up to 1815, but he had been too closely identified with the Emperor to enjoy the favor of the Bourbons, whom he had once served. And so, after that, it was somewhat dull and obscure, until the French dream of conquest in Africa



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was brought to pass, some years after Waterloo.

In those years Sister Claire went about from one barrack hospital to another, for soldiers need tending in peace as well as in war. The years that made De Bourmont more sombre and taciturn, made her brighter and calmer. So much brightness and calmness of spirit could not but be reflected in her face, and, being beautiful in the beginning, she seemed to grow more so as time went on. Age passed her by. The activity of her life was such that her figure retained its airy slightness, and she continued to walk with the graceful swiftness with which she had moved through the dismal corridors of Holyrood Palace.

In the twenties, France had constant trouble with Algiers, and Sister Claire was sent out to Africa, at the head of a band of sisters, to nurse the sick. She had a fine hospital, though small, and government aid, and never, in all her

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religious life, was she so comfortable in certain ways ; but never did Sister Claire become so nearly dissatisfied.

“I do not understand civilians very well, dear mother,” she wrote to the superior. “I have been used so long to nursing Jean Baptiste, to scolding him, and making him obey the doctor, and take care of his shoes, and even to washing his one shirt for him, that I cannot accustom myself to the dilettante ways of other people, who know as well how to take care of themselves as I do.”

One fine morning in 1827, though, a great French fleet was seen off the town of Algiers, and a cannonade began. It cannot be denied that the first batch of wounded sailors brought into Sister Claire’s hospital caused her to feel at least twenty years younger ; and from that on, she had her beloved soldiers, as well as sailors, to nurse, and was correspondingly happy.

When the first advance in force, of twenty thousand men, was determined

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on, the French surgeon-general, who was an old acquaintance of Sister Claire's, came to her and said, bluntly :

“ You must come with us. You are worth the whole medical staff when it comes to actual fighting in the field.”

“ Do you think I would have stayed behind ? ” somewhat indignantly asked Sister Claire.

On a June evening, the French column started for the plateau, where it was well understood that the Algerians meant to give battle. It was a fine sight, and as Sister Claire sat in her little white-covered cart, watching the beautiful precision with which cavalry, infantry, and artillery took their place in line, she felt more excited than she had since 1815. As the second division, headed by the artillery, was about to move, a general officer rode out from among the group of officers around the commander-in-chief and took his place at the head of the column. A tremendous cheer greeted him, which he acknowledged

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by lifting his chapeau and bowing ceremoniously. He was a long distance away from Sister Claire ; but when the fading light fell upon his head, which was quite gray, and his bronzed features, she suddenly caught her breath and turned white. She did not need to ask his name ; the thirty years of their separation melted away in one instant of time ; it was De Bourmont. Several hours passed before the little ambulance brought up the end of the rear guard. As the wagon jolted over the rough road, sometimes brilliantly illuminated for a moment by the moon, which sailed high in the heavens, and, again, lost in the impenetrable darkness of wood and ravine, Sister Claire sat quite silent. Usually, like an old soldier, she was gay at the prospect of going into battle ; but on this June night, under an African sky, she scarcely spoke to her companion, another white-capped sister, who, like herself, placid and silent, awaited the labors of the morrow.

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Sister Claire's retrospection was keen, but not unhappy. She knew De Bourmont's reputation in the army well,—intrepid, devoted to his duty, idolized by his men; he might have been happier, he could not have been better. For herself, she had felt from the beginning the peace which follows the putting away of self and the devotion of one's life to those who suffer.

The stars seemed large, and very near to her, as she looked out of the hooded wagon up at the blue-black sky. It was not her first night-march, by any means. She remembered them among the snows of Russia; she recalled the night after Waterloo, and the drenching rain, and all the horrors of that time. Near by was the steady tramp of thousands of feet, and afar off, the rolling sound of the field guns on the rocky road. The columns climbed upward steadily toward the plateau. It was only a few leagues away; Sister Claire knew they would make it before day-

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light. Then she must be ready for work, getting the ambulance in order, so it would be well for her to sleep. She lay down in the bottom of the cart with her companion, and in five minutes was sleeping peacefully. But she had said, with fervor, the little prayer she made every night for De Bourmont; and she had done this for more than thirty years.

The gray sky of dawn was changing to an all rose and opal tint when the cart halted, and Sister Claire, with the surgeon-in-chief, surveyed the field with an eye to establishing her ambulance. On one side the torrent Midiffia flowed noisily, while rugged ravines and rocky hills and dales were before the French troops. Already the ferocious tribesmen were seen, hovering in great numbers on the horizon, while the distant roll of wheels over the stony ground showed that the Algerians were provided with artillery.

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Sister Claire chose her position with a soldier's eye.

"It is here, I think, Monsieur le Docteur," she said, pointing to a little hollow well up the side of the plateau, but protected from the probable range of fire. "Our brave 'enfants' will make a stand here; and, you see, there is a fairly good road to a spot lower down, where the wounded may be transported after their wounds are dressed, and be quite safe."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "It will be pretty hot up here," he said.

"Of course," replied Sister Claire, coolly; "but where it is hot, is where we are needed."

"Well, sister," responded the doctor, laughing, "you are an old campaigner, and have been under fire oftener than I have — and for the honor of my profession I will not ask for a safer place."

Scarcely had the bright lances of the June sunrise lit up the plain than thirty

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thousand Algerians were seen, formed in a long, crescent-shaped line, with the artillery in the middle, advancing. The red-legged French soldiers awaited the order to advance — in high spirits, laughing, singing, and indulging in that horse-play which French discipline allows until the actual moment of going into action. They were formed into three divisions, and Sister Claire had no trouble in picking out, among the brilliant staff that was assembled under the shade of an ilex grove, the figure of De Bourmont. The French paid no attention to the great bodies of Kabyle horsemen who, dashing up close to their lines, would fire a volley, then turn and fly. Their fire did little damage, and when they grew bolder, and came nearer, a volley from the French muskets scattered them. When, however, the Algerian centre advanced upon the plateau, then the French went to work in earnest. As the first line of the French moved forward, the infantry



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infantry, each regiment led by its colonel, were moving steadily toward the circle of guns, from which the red death poured in sheets of flame and smoke, making the June morning dark. And every step they advanced, they left behind them men writhing on the stony ground.

"We must go farther on," cried Sister Claire, suddenly; "we cannot get those wounded men here; we must go to them. You stay here, sister," she said to her companion. "Come, doctor; come, Pierre and Auguste, let us go!" and seizing a basket of lint and bandages, she started briskly up the hill, quickly followed by the doctor and two or three bearers; and then the men began to bring the wounded to her, and soon she and the doctor were surrounded by a circle of bleeding creatures. Never was she more active or more helpful, but in the fearful struggle going on before her eyes, scarcely half a mile's distance, she could see, at inter-

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vals, De Bourmont's martial figure on foot, and always heading the line. They had reached the Algerian batteries now, and there was hand-to-hand fighting, the Algerians being bayoneted at their guns, while another column of red legs moved steadily up the incline to support De Bourmont's column.

In the midst of it all, the sharp screech of a shell was heard above the spot where the doctor and Sister Claire worked side by side among a crowd of wounded men, and the next moment it dropped among them. The doctor, the bearers, and even the sufferers themselves were paralyzed, for the fuse was still burning. Not so Sister Claire. She quickly picked up the shell and ran with the activity of a girl of twenty down the hillside. A cheer broke from the doctor and the bearers, and even the poor wounded men joined faintly in the cry. Sister Claire had gone nearly a hundred yards, when she laid the shell down carefully and turned

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to run back. She was just half a minute too late. A deafening report was heard, and she was seen to fall to the ground, bleeding from a dozen wounds; and at the same moment a shout went up from thousands of throats as De Bourmont, mounting his horse, dashed forward in pursuit of the flying Algerians.

. . . . .

The hospital of the Sisters of Mercy at Algiers was a pleasant place; and when, many days after this, Sister Claire awoke to consciousness, there was rejoicing, not only in the hospital, but among the soldiers, too. Every day the gate had been besieged by men coming to inquire after her, and when at last it was known that she would recover, the joy of the Jean Baptistes was touching. Many officers had sent to ask after her, but they did not cry, as the soldiers did, when told at first that she could not get well, and laugh some days after, when told that she could.



“ She was just half a minute too late. ’

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Many months passed on. The French were everywhere victorious, and by October, the rainy season beginning, all of the troops were recalled to the neighborhood of the city of Algiers.

By that time Sister Claire was quite well, and apparently her terrible experience had done her no harm at all. She was deeply interested in the results of the campaign, and heard with delight of the rescue of Christian captives, and the chances that the nation of corsairs was likely to be no more a scourge to civilization. She also knew that the general in command had gone back to France on sick leave, and General de Bourmont was temporarily in command. And one morning, sitting in the garden and looking toward the glorious Bay of Algiers, she saw a smart French frigate drop her anchor, and one of the convalescent officers said to her : —

“That is ‘La Minerve.’ She brings out the decorations for the campaign.

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General de Bourmont is sure to be made lieutenant-general."

A day or two after that, one morning, the superior came to Sister Claire's room — for she was a guest of her own order then — and said, smiling proudly :

"What think you, sister? We are especially invited to attend at the distribution of decorations to-morrow morning. Here is a letter from General de Bourmont; and he particularly wishes you to be present, he says, on account of your services to the army. But the rest of us are not forgotten either, and the general speaks in the kindest manner of what little we have been able to do for our poor soldiers."

The superior did not offer to show Sister Claire the letter from General de Bourmont, and Sister Claire did not ask to see it; but, like the superior, she glowed with natural pride at the compliment paid their order.

All that day the sisters were in a flutter; and among themselves, when

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Sister Claire was not present, they said :  
“ How glorious ! how honorable to our  
order ! We must give especial thanks  
to the Blessed Lady for this.”

Sister Claire, however, was purposely  
kept in the dark ; and the next morning  
she was the least excited of the party of  
twenty sisters who took their way, two  
and two, toward the great plain on the  
south of the city.

Never was the scene more beautiful.  
The rains had begun, and in a few days  
the face of the earth had become green  
with the most luxuriant foliage. The  
ships in the little harbor were dressed in  
honor of the occasion, and the French  
frigate, anchored in the bay, was covered  
with flags. On the great plain were  
found ten thousand men, on three sides  
of a square. The fourth side was left  
open, and facing it was General de  
Bourmont and a splendid staff. Upon  
the surrounding heights were great mul-  
titudes of people, — French, Arabs,  
Jews, Turks, all watching the scene.



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A blare of military music smote the morning air, as all the bands in the French-African army crashed out.

Sister Claire's heart beat; yes, De Bourmont was to have the reward of valor; it was just. And he had that other reward,—the esteem and love which waits upon a commander who loves his men like his children.

Sister Claire had supposed that they would simply be given good positions where they could see the ceremonies of the day, and was rather surprised when the superior, with whom she was walking, moved directly toward the opening in the hollow square; and she was still more surprised when a young aide dashed up, and, dismounting, respectfully led the little band of white-capped nuns to a position very near the staff. And, strangely enough, she began to be agitated, and to feel as if some crisis in her life were at hand. General de Bourmont would probably come up after the ceremonies were over and speak to

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them—and would he recognize her? And then the bands stopped suddenly, and Sister Claire, looking up, heard the young officer who had escorted them saying, with a smile: “Sister, I believe it is your turn first to be decorated.”

Sister Claire looked at him in dumb amazement, and then looked toward the superior.

“It is true, sister,” said the superior, who was also smiling, but whose eyes were moist. “You are to be decorated. We knew some time ago that you had been recommended, and your decoration arrived yesterday, and we have arranged this as a glorious surprise to you.”

Sister Claire’s face grew a rosy red. She hesitated a moment, but the aide, bowing low, and pointing to the waiting group of officers, where a number of soldiers of all ages who were to be decorated were assembled near them, she advanced with him toward the commander-in-chief. It was some distance across the sand, glowing with the morn-

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ing sun, and the fierceness of the glare and the emotion that she feared showed in her usually calm face, kept her eyes to the ground. But when she reached the general and his staff, and had paused, a voice rang out that thrilled her to the soul. It was that of General de Bourmont, as he said : —

“ Sister Claire ! ”

At that she raised her eyes, and her gaze met De Bourmont's. For some moments each forgot everything in the world except the other. They forgot the stretch of more than thirty years since last they had looked into each other's eyes. They forgot the waiting thousands of troops, the vast multitude of spectators. The white sand and fierce sun of Algiers melted into the gloomy old palace of Holyrood. They were once more De Bourmont and Lady Betty Stair. As they stood thus, each reading the other's soul through the eyes, some keen inner sympathy told them that, however much their hearts

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had suffered, their souls had thriven on that nobler life that each had led. And as they felt clearly and more clearly every moment, that in those years of self-sacrifice, and of that agony of separation, their newer and better selves had been born and lived and suffered, so did the dazzling happiness of the life they might have lived together reveal itself in all its splendid beauty. Those moments of solemn exaltation seemed like an age to Sister Claire and De Bourmont; but, in truth, it was only long enough to make the gorgeous group of waiting officers wonder at De Bourmont's strange silence; and when he spoke, his voice was not altogether calm.

“When scarcely more than twenty-three years of age, you followed our soldiers to Egypt and faithfully tended them. You were severely wounded in the retreat from Acre. You followed the French army to Spain, to Germany, and even to Russia. Your courage in

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saving ten wounded men at the passage of the Beresina is remembered. You were in every battle from the frontier to the gates of Paris, in 1814, and were three times wounded. At Waterloo you were carried off the field for dead among the corpses of a number of cuirassiers. For three years you have labored in Algiers, and at the battle of Staoueli, when a shell with a burning fuse fell near your ambulance, endangering the lives of your wounded, you picked it up and carried it more than eighty yards before it exploded, wounding you terribly. But your life was preserved in all these dangers, and you have been spared to the soldiers who love you so well. His Majesty, knowing of your devotion to our army, has placed your name at the head of those who are to be rewarded to-day. And, by his command, I present you with the Cross for Tried Bravery. None has deserved it more than you."

At the first sound of his voice both

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of them came back out of that shadowy world in which their other selves had met face to face. De Bourmont's voice grew stronger as he continued speaking ; and he fixed his eyes upon her angelic face, shining under her nun's bonnet. She noticed that he was gray and very grave. She knew, then, as well as if a thousand tongues had told her, that, from the day of their parting, the gay, the careless, the dashing De Bourmont had ceased to exist, and in his place was this earnest and devoted soldier, who lived for his country and was ready to die for it. She became conscious by degrees of the scene around her,—the African sun blazing upon the white sand, the imposing sight of many thousands of veterans assembled to see valor rewarded. And then, De Bourmont's hand pinned a splendid decoration upon her breast.

Ten thousand men presented arms to this brave woman ; the officers, led by General de Bourmont, saluted with

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their swords; the multitude burst into thunders of cheers; the bands rang out a patriotic air; and Sister Claire stood with downcast head and tears dropping upon the coarse habit she wore. After a moment she looked up into De Bourmont's eyes. Each understood the other. The love of the young soldier and the Lady Betty Stair had lasted through more than thirty years, and in that time it had become so purified and ennobled that it was not unworthy of the angels themselves. In De Bourmont's face might yet be seen a haunting disappointment; but in his heart he could not, as a lover of his fellow-man, believe that Sister Claire's life might have been happier.

Late that afternoon, Sister Claire, who had been busy writing in her cell at the gray old convent, went into the garden to look for the superior. The garden, with its olive groves and clumps of fig-trees, was very cool and sweet after the heat of the day. The superior

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and two or three of the sisters were walking up and down a shaded alley ; they were still talking about the glories of that day for one of their order.

“ I came to show you, mother, a letter I have written to General de Bourmont,” said Sister Claire. “ We knew each other in our youth, and it was thought at one time that he was responsible for the death of my only brother. Afterward it was proved that he was not, and I took pains to have him informed of it. Here is the letter I have written him ” : —

GENERAL DE BOURMONT : — I desire to express to his Majesty, and to yourself personally, my heartfelt thanks for the very great honor conferred upon me. I only did my duty, as many others have done, and I felt rewarded in the thought that I did it for God and my fellow-creatures ; but this other reward is not the less dear to me. For yourself, General de Bourmont, accept my thanks and good wishes. I have always remembered your goodness to me, of many



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years ago, and I shall continue to do so  
and to pray for you to the last hour of my  
life.

SISTER CLAIRE.

“A very proper letter,” said the mother superior, who was full of pride in the great doings of the day; “and I will send it off immediately.”

Two hours afterward, when the sisters had had their supper in the refectory, they were assembled again in the garden. The sun was gone down, but a beautiful rosy haze lay over the landscape, and a young moon trembled in the violet sky. One of the lay sisters came running into the garden with a letter.

“It is for Sister Claire; and General de Bourmont himself brought it,” she cried.

The sisters all gathered around. It was only a fitting winding up of the glories of the day for Sister Claire to get a letter from the general himself, delivered in person. There was still enough of the pale and lingering light

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to read by, and Sister Claire read her letter aloud in a clear, sweet voice :

General de Bourmont presents his respectful compliments to Sister Claire, and has the honor of informing her that her thanks will be personally conveyed by him to his Majesty. The noble career of Sister Claire has been watched by the whole French army, and she will become, more than ever, an object of respectful devotion to the soldiers of France, of all ranks. It was unknown to General de Bourmont, though, that in Sister Claire was his friend of former days. He remembers with gratitude Sister Claire's kindness to him at the long distant period to which she refers ; and he begs that she will always consider him her friend and devoted servant during the rest of his life.

(Signed)

DE BOURMONT.

“What a fine, splendid, brave letter !” cried all the sisters, delighted ; “and to think it should turn out that Sister Claire and General de Bourmont are old friends !”

Presently all went indoors, except Sis-

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ter Claire. She remained, walking up and down, with her beautiful eyes fixed on the stars that shone with soft splendor. Heaven seemed very near to her.

Afar off, on the sandy plain, De Bourmont sat on his horse quite motionless, and looked toward the white-walled convent which held Sister Claire. His eyes were full of tears for the broken hearts of their youth; but he said to himself, "I would not have it different now."





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